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## The house of Being

By George Steiner

### MARTIN HEIDEGGER:

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Heidegger and Wittgenstein dominate philosophy in the twentieth century. It has, for a long time, been customary to oppose the two names, to see in Heidegger's philosophy of being something like a contrary pursuit to Wittgenstein's investigations of the linguistic and psychological conditions of speech in general and of philosophical propositions in particular. This polarity looks increasingly spurious. As K. O. Apel may have been one of the first to suggest (in a seminal essay on Wittgenstein and Heidegger, published in 1965), the affinities could prove more important than the evident differences. For both Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the key question is this: is philosophy a valid enterprise in our time? If it is, what can one suppose and exemplify its means of discourse and of existence to be? In both Heidegger and Wittgenstein certain cardinal questions - about perception, about learning, about the place of the speaker in speech acts, about the status of introspection - go back explicitly to Saint Augustine. The impact of Kierkegaard's existentialism and arguments on temporality on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* has long been obvious. The impact of Kierkegaard on Wittgenstein's ethics, on his "thinking style" is becoming manifest. To Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the question of whether or not philosophy can be "taught" - and what the legitimate compromises involved in such an activity might turn out to be - was perennial and fruitfully unsettling.

Principally, distance allows one to grasp to what extent both Heidegger and Wittgenstein are, in their respective ways, summations of and, very likely, epilogues to, the tradition of German speculative discourse on morals and metaphysics, on epistemology and pedagogy (though *paideia* would be the better word), which runs from Herder and Kant to the present, and which has, after Greek philosophy, been the main line of philosophic thought in the West. It is precisely his location in this context which makes of Wittgenstein's work as serious, as "transcendent" a business as was Heidegger's, and which makes both fundamentally irreducible to the trivializations inherent in much of Anglo-American logical positivism and "linguistic philosophy".

There is, even at a bibliographic level, no satisfactory measure of Heidegger's presence in twentieth-century philosophy, aesthetics, theology, social thought. Though indispensable, H.-M. Saa's *Heidegger-Bibliographie* (1968, 1974) and *Materialien zu Heidegger-Bibliographie 1917-71* (1975) were not exhaustive when issued and are now outdated. Current estimates put at some four and a half to five thousand the number of monographs and articles on Heidegger. He is, with Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, the thinker who has elicited the largest secondary literature in the history of philosophy. Very roughly indeed - Heidegger's purpose is a constant throughout even the most formally and contingently diverse of his writings - one can make out four main legacies and spheres of influence.

The first is that of the "history of philosophy", though Heidegger himself would repudiate this term precisely because he regards all philosophic "serious" thought to be an *Auseinandersetzung* ("confrontation with", "encounter in dialogue with") with previous systematic thought. For Heidegger, "the history of philosophy" is philosophy itself, as it has been argued, experienced, critically re-thought, in the West. The "non-Heideggerian" can, however, make a distinction. He can make out in the corpus of Heidegger's writings a major portion which addresses itself, in seemingly traditional style, to the explication, valuation, re-ordering of Western philosophy. In Marburg, from 1923 to 1928, Heidegger lectured on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Logic*, on Plato's *Sophist*, on Kant's critiques, on the sources and development of phenomenology, on the Scholastics and Aquinas in particular (Heidegger's dissertation had been on Duns Scotus), and on Leibniz. In Freiburg, where he taught from 1928 to 1941, Heidegger "read" and "read on" the German academic expression being, here, more graphic than our "taught" - Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, with particular attention to Fichte's concept of freedom and Hegel's phenomenology. He lectured on "logic as an inquiry towards language" (1934), on Kant, on Nietzsche (an extensive series of seminars, from 1936 to 1942), on Parmenides and

Heracitus. The famous courses on "An Introduction to Metaphysics" of 1935, and on "Fundamental Questions of Metaphysics" in 1935-6, are "historical" in their presentation of the issues as they have been posed and have been thought to have been posed - the distinction is, for Heidegger, didactically and cognitively essential - since antiquity. Necessarily, the result of all this is a re-valuation of stature and relations in Western philosophy.

As is well known, Heidegger ascribes to the Pre-Socratics, to Parmenides and Heraclitus above all, a privileged immediacy of ontological vision. They are still in touch, as it were, with "Being", with the primal fact of the mystery and "radiant concealment" of existence - "indiant" because manifest in every phenomenon and self-declaratory far beyond the sum of individual phenomena, "concealed" because it cannot be analytically isolated or paraphrased. It is from certain Pre-Socratic fragments, such as Parmenides on the "oneness of being" or Heraclitus on the essential relations between "saying" and "being", that Heidegger derives his own attempts to "think Being", to "think the essence". Plato's idealism was a fatal (though, says Heidegger, also inevitable) deflection from the Pre-Socratic experience. Though salutary in its concrete mundanity, in its grasp of the nature of action of man's place in the world, Aristotle's critique of Plato in turn led to scientism, to the conviction that the core of reality was analysable, that matter was "there to be scientifically classified and technologically harnessed". In Descartes, in utilitarian philosophies, in modern positivism, in the "geometric" bias of Husserl's phenomenological model - and here is the root of Heidegger's dissent from his master - the Aristotelian "error" is compounded. Thus, for Heidegger, the history of Western metaphysics and epistemology, like that of Western man, is "the history of the forgetting of Being". It follows that the successive modes of systematic thought must be read in the "light" - this trope of Apollonian radiance being quite literal to Heidegger - of their nearness to or distance from the one and supreme question of all serious thought: Leibniz's "Pourquoi il y a plutôt quelque chose que rien?" which Heidegger rephrased as: "What is the Being (*das Sein*) which renders possible all *das* (*das Seiende*)?"

It is too early to tell to what extent these interpretations have altered the status of his predecessors. Will we come to recognize a shared *naïveté* in respect of the mind-body disjunction in Plato, Descartes and Kant? Will Heidegger's insistence on the existential primacy of "time" over "space" radically diminish the authority and coherence of such space-oriented epistemologies as we find them in Aristotelian notions of "extension", in Cartesian geometries and the "categories" of Kant? How useful is Heidegger's explication of the "aesthetic nihilism" which leads Nietzsche to pass beyond idealism and beyond anthropomorphic mastery over the world - the "Will to Power" - into the dead end of negation? The current return to the Pre-Socratics in philosophical commentary and the history of philosophy is, on the Continent, as well as in America, openly Heideggerian. Increasingly, the study of Kant, Schelling, Fichte is being conducted in Heideggerian or strongly anti-Heideggerian terms. Only one thing can be said with confidence: in their sheer volume, in their exigent intensity, Heidegger's readings of Western philosophers from Anaxagoras to Husserl and French existentialism - the *Letter on Humanism* of 1946 remains the unmet challenge to Sartre and to the nascent structuralist movements - constitute an inexhaustibly instructive example of undeciphering in action. No other philosopher has "read philosophy" as productively as has Heidegger (a reading to which Karl Jaspers' *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, 1978, provides a fascinating echo).

Art is important to Heidegger from the outset. Certain stylistic features in *Sein und Zeit* very probably reflect contemporary Expressionism. But it is in his later writings, notably during the 1950s and 60s, when seeking to elucidate the ontological presence of "things" and when arguing radical distinctions between an existential and a technical "at-homeness in the world", that Heidegger turns to plastic and graphic arts, and to Van Gogh above all. His elucidation of why/why it should be that Van Gogh's presentation of a pair of worn boots should be real far beyond any "scientific" description of such boots, of how/why it is that no technical prescription for the manufacture of the said boots produces a knowledge and experience of their reality comparable to that in the

painting, of how/why Van Gogh communicates to us the "felt life" of the wearing of the boots as it had communicated itself to the farmer who trod the earth with them - this commentary, which deliberately turns Platonism on its head, alone would ensure the place of Heidegger's thought in the very short list of first-order contributions to our understanding of art. Here Gerard Manley Hopkins's intuitions of the "epiphany in things", of their vital quiddity, has found its philosophical realization.

Heidegger's contributions to "poetics" are of the same force and tenor. It is certain poetic texts - in Sophocles, in Hölderlin, in Rilke, in Trakl - which retain and "body forth" the original presence and pressures of Being. It is in very great poetry that each and every one of us can experience the precedence of the *Lagos* over human usage and over "logic". *Die Sprache spricht*, "language speaks" through the poet far more than it "is spoken" by him. This makes of the poet, in Heidegger's magnificent expression, the "shepherd of Being". To "enter" a great poem, to be "entered by it", is to return from the alienations and mendacities of our daily technical lives into "the house of Being". No metaphysics has ever honoured the poet quite as does Heidegger's. (The English-language reader will find useful approaches to Heidegger's poetics in the collection *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 1971, and in the special issue on Heidegger and literature of *Boundary 2*, IV, 1976). Heidegger's "ways towards reading" have been massively influential. The "deconstructionism" of Derrida and of the American "post-structuralists" can best be understood as attempts, either mimetic or polemic, to apply Heidegger's hermeneutics. What is more important, certain great poets have responded to Heidegger, often in adopting his own terms. This is strikingly true of Paul Celan - whose precise personal, spiritual relations to Heidegger remain one of the enigmatic nodes in modern literary-philosophical history - and of René Char.

The third domain in which Heidegger's impact is being felt increasingly is that of social thought or, more awkwardly but precisely, of "philosophic anthropology". The ontology of *Sein und Zeit* is that of "man's being-in-the-world", of his radical immanence and even, if we give

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back to this word its eminent and Pausanias sense, of his "mundanity". The primary concepts of "being" and of "temporality" can be understood only in terms of man's full existential relation to his world. This relation is no neutral registration of the data of consciousness as it can be argued to be in Descartes, in Kant, in Husserl. It is a relation of active, constant involvement with others, of the necessary projection of the self into the "otherness" of surrounding humanity. It is a profoundly affective relation to which Heidegger assigned the new famous name of *Sorge* or "caring care". At the same time - and here is Heidegger's characteristic dialectical motion of argument - this *Sorge* must bring the individual "home" to his "being-in-Being", of authentic self-actualization and self-harvesting. If "mundanity" becomes an end in itself, if we yield the quick of our spirit into the keeping of materialist "socialite", merely professional, forces, we shall literally lapse from the integral self. The authentic "I" will, in Heidegger's analysis, become the mass-consumption "one". Hence, the enormously influential Heideggerian treatment of the problem of personal authenticity in death, of the difficulties and deterrent illusions which modern society puts in the way of "dying one's own death", of that most integral of home-comings.

This "existentialism of personal authenticity" directly entails those ecological concerns which have now become commonplace. They were nothing of the kind when Heidegger published his *summa* more than half a century ago. Heidegger's person and style are of the earth earthy or, if one wants to be exact and to suggest the ubiquitous "forest" imagery in his thought, "of the forest sylvan". Long before Western sensibility awoke to the material and psychological menace posed by the technological ruin of the environment, Heidegger warned of catastrophe. For Heidegger, he that desecrates farmland, the pulp of forests, chains the life-force of flowing water behind dams and generators, is doing more than make of this haunted planet a garbage-tip. He is, again most literally, cutting man off from "the gods", that is to say, from the hosts who have, for reasons unfathomable to us, given us being instead of non-being. He is, in short, acting as would a guest who, on entering his host's lodging, begins fouling it and laying it waste. Such may have been the attitude of one of Heidegger's alarm, such (at the time) its isolation, that it became one of the main motives for his *inextinguishable*, albeit very brief, entry into Nazism. After the war, Heidegger's *Sorge* over the technological cannibalization of the earth becomes even more anguished. He will see in the exploitative, scientific-technological values of both the United States and the Soviet Union an identical threat to the ever more precarious survival of the natural environment and of those quintessential occasions of solitude of exposure to the pulse of Being, which only this environment offers. If there is a metaphysics of the ecological movement, it is Heidegger's. (The English-language reader will find some of the key texts in *The Question Concerning Technology*, 1977).

**GYÖRGY LUKÁCS**

His Life in Pictures and Documents Compiled and edited by Eva Fekete and Eva Kárdi Cloth, Budapest 1981, Corvina

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To judge by the bibliographies, it is in theology and theological exegesis that Heidegger's influence really began. Both H.-G. Gadamer and Rudolf Bultmann have given detailed witness as to Heidegger's impact on Marburg theologians as early as his first interventions in colloquia and seminars in 1923. Heidegger's own express position is sharply "anti-theological". What he calls and condemns as "onto-theological" is the deep strain of Platonic idealism and transcendental epistemology in the whole of Christianity. It is this strain which "abstracts" God, which merely translates "spurious" metaphysical notions of the "absolute", of "eternal truth", of "timelessness and spatial infinity", into the categorically unimaginable, inaccessible "Deity".



Heidegger in 1914

(Heidegger does Christianity the honour of assuming that it is monotheistic, a point on which other thinkers have their more or less polite doubts). Thus post-Platonic, post-Cartesian "onto-theology" removes God from any structural relation to the world, removes Him from temporality, and makes of Christianity, and most especially of Christianized Protestantism, just another metaphysical system. The force of Heidegger's challenge proved fruitful. As Fr. William J. Richardson shows in his invaluable *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (1963), current schools of "Christian existentialism", current attempts to "relocate God in existence", in both Catholic and Protestant circles, are visibly marked by the Heideggerian impulse. The same is true of the more limited field of hermeneutics. One need only glance at a gathering such as the Festschrift for Bultmann, *Zeit und Geschichte* (1964), to see that Heideggerian speculations on language, on the epiphany of Being in and through speech acts, that Heideggerian tactics of "thinking after the text" (*nach-denken*), have penetrated to even the technical-grammatical treatments of Scripture. Heidegger's presence, first at Marburg, then at Freiburg, mark a chapter in the long, often curious, history of Western uses of the Word, and Word of God. The "negative" continuity from Saint Augustine and Kierkegaard is evident.

Heidegger himself would deprecate any division of his work into distinct rubrics. For him, all thought which can be termed philosophical is an attempt "to think Being", to clarify the relations between essences as individual phenomena and the principle of essence. A passage in Coleridge may be the most succinct summation we have of Heidegger's monolithic pursuit: "Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the considerations of EXISTENCE, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself, thoughtfully, 'I am', heedless in that moment, whether I were a man before thee, or a flower, or a grain of sand?' Heidegger did little else but ask this question while giving heed to man to flower and forest, to star and sand." (Coleridge, in *Heidegger*, among Heidegger's ancestors in spirit, as he is for Coleridge and Blake). But the unity of Heidegger's writings has been difficult to grasp because of the simple fact that the great majority of the texts were unpublished during his long lifetime - and here, also, is a vital parallel to Wittgenstein.

At the time of Heidegger's death, in 1976, only a relatively limited portion of his *opera omnia* had appeared in print. His studies of Fichte, and Schelling, his teachings on the concept of negation in Hegel, the treatise he composed in 1924 on temporality, the 1941 work on "the beginning" (*Ueber den Anfang*), the 1943 lectures on the history of the

course on Leibniz and logic of 1928 - vital to Heidegger's ontology of essences - the "history of Being" (*Aus der Geschichte des Seins*, 1939), the analyses of nihilism which were set down in 1946-48 - these and much else were available only in typewritten, fragmentary seminar-notes or not at all. There were complicated reasons for this situation. Heidegger seems to have felt that the incompletion of *Sein und Zeit*, voluminous as it is - the book remains the most famous torso in the history of philosophy - could entail a false or inadequate context for the understanding of subsequent ideas. The war years and the period of personal ostracism which followed may well have inhibited publication. But just as in the case of Wittgenstein, so there is in that of Heidegger, a strategy of "negative historicism", a cultivation of withdrawal into silence and the esoteric. Unpublished, many of Heidegger's monographs have exercised a peculiar spell on the philosophical community. Heidegger was a master of patience.

But whatever may have been the causes, this situation makes of a complete edition an absolute necessity. Heidegger's strengths and weaknesses, the genesis of his singular modes of discourse, the unavoidable problem of his politics - when he re-edited, for a 1953 edition, his *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1935, he did not, and in my view most properly, alter or erase a sentence on the inherent "truth and greatness" of the National Socialist movement and early ideal - cannot be judged, indeed experienced, responsibly until the *Gesamtausgabe* is to hand. It would, therefore, be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the projected *Gesamtausgabe* in fifty-seven volumes which is now in progress.

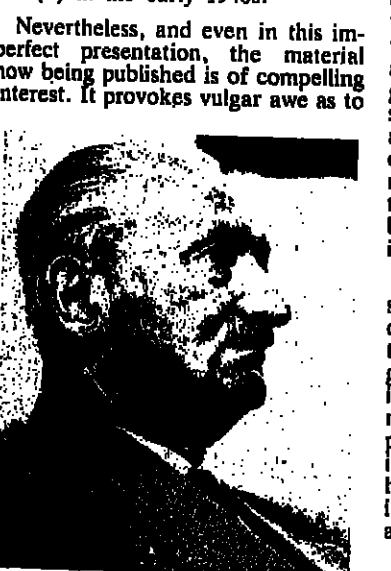
The volumes so far published are identical, in their discreet grey binding, somewhat squat format and soberly spaced typography, with all the separate Heidegger texts issued previously by the same publisher, Klostermann of Frankfurt. A first batch has come under the general heading *Abteilung II* which is to comprise all the available written versions of the lectures delivered by Heidegger between 1923 and 1944. We have here the 1923 *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, the lectures on logic and truth of 1925-26; *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, a crucial set of lectures from the summer term of 1927; the "Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason", which dates from the following winter; *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, summer term of 1928; the 1930-31 exposition of Hegel's *Phänomenologie*; the 1931 lectures on Aristotle's metaphysics; the lectures on two hymns by Hölderlin, "Germanien" and "Der Rhein", which Heidegger gave in 1934-35; and a double volume which includes the course on the origins of Western thought and on the original of Heraclitus doctrine of the Logos, both of which date from 1943-44. When completed, the *Gesamtausgabe* is to have four sections. The first, of which four volumes are now in hand, will present all of Heidegger's published writings from 1914 to 1970; as mentioned above, the second will print all sets of lectures; *Abteilung III* will consist of hitherto unpublished material, 1919-67; and there is to be a final section, of Heidegger's "notes and sketches", of editorial matter. According to present plans, these two latter sections will comprise one or two tomes. The previously published works will take up some sixteen volumes, the lectures roughly forty.

The Reinhard Luth edition of Fichte's complete works, correspondence, conversations is, strictly, incomparable. It has set standards of exhaustiveness, of textual scholarship, of editorial context beyond those of any other complete edition of a major philosopher. The Hegel edition, now in labour, progress, is of a markedly more modest but still impressive standard. If there is some hope in such enterprises, what we have so far of the Heidegger *opera omnia* must be very low indeed. Each volume is so brief as to be of almost no use. Sometimes we are told that the printed text reproduces the genuine *Wortlaut* of the lecturer.

ie, that it is a verbatim transcription. At other times, it is affirmed that the text is based on Heidegger's manuscript plus a stenographic report by this or that auditor (shades of Coleridge and of Wittgenstein). In one or two cases, the editorial note cites a manuscript prepared by a member of Heidegger's family under the master's supervision. The vexed problem of the precise relations between these various lectures and previously published monographs, such as the ones on Hölderlin or Kant, is touched on summarily if at all. Till now, the volumes have been published in no discernible order. The phenomenological interpretation of Kant is Volume 25, the commentary on Hölderlin is Volume 39. There are no indexes and footnotes appear to be limited wholly to those provided by Heidegger himself.

Now it may be that some of these drastic defects will be remedied by the promised volume of *Hinweise*, it may be that a general index, a more ample textual recension and a collation between published and unpublished writings will be forthcoming. If so, these several aids will have to be massive and will have to marshal the kind of scholarship, of pedantic scruple and editorial authority almost lacking so far. This is not to deny, for a moment the imaginative boldness, the economic courage, the sheer largesse of spirit which animate the Klostermann venture. There is something breathtaking about the launching of this Leviathan by a commercial house in the present-day climate of publishing. But it is, of course, just because the job is so magnificently worth doing, that it ought to be done definitively. Moreover, in the case of a thinker as intricate as Heidegger, as politically vulnerable, as hidden in so many vital moments of his development, textual problems demand the most stringent handling. Simply consider the "philosophical" questions which must surround lengthy pronouncements on Nietzsche spoken (?), written (?) in the early 1940s!

Nevertheless, and even in this imperfect presentation, the material now being published is of compelling interest. It provokes vulgar awe as to



Heidegger in later life

Heidegger's fantastic industry, as to the sheer range and expository powers of a teacher whose lecture-courses in successive university terms run to many hundreds of printed pages and treat the whole compass of Western philosophy with both lyric breadth and technicality. In these nine volumes, a number of the major points are made salient: the great role of Leibniz throughout Heidegger's epistemology, his choice of Kant's critiques as the ground on which to hammer out much of his own doctrine of truth and on which to pursue in depth the dissent from the phenomenology of Husserl. The Hölderlin exegesis runs to very nearly three hundred pages (two poems are being considered). Much of it seems to me wrong-headed - Heidegger is a true reader of Sophocles, of Trakl, than he is of Hölderlin, but the intensity, the probing force of the exercise are methodologically fascinating.

Apart, however, from any particular considerations, these several sets of lectures do raise a general, disturbing issue. They are, almost everywhere, laid to a degree, the vocabulary, the syntax, the expository ordering, are outstandingly clear and "public". The famous Heideggerian "darkness", the at times quasi-insuperable obstacles, to agreed understanding offered by portions of *Sein und Zeit*, not to speak of later

meditations of "nothingness" and the "ontic", contrast disturbingly with these hitherto unavailable yet vital works. Naturally, there is a contingent reason: these are lectures presumably meant to be understood by students. But this is a point which ought not to be overstressed: witness the obscurities of Heidegger's contributions to the Heraclitus seminar which he taught (jointly with Eugen Fink) in 1966-67, and which was published in 1970. Some more working mechanism or tactic of self-cloaking, of self-dramatization through opaqueness, may have been operative when Heidegger addressed "the world" rather than the university. One is reminded of T. E. Lawrence brusquely, self-contemptuously perhaps, shedding the Arab gear he had worn to an All Souls occasion, the instant he entered the college pantry.

But like many other questions, that of Heidegger's seeming alternation between the esoteric and the lucidly didactic, can only be looked at seriously when the work as a whole is available. With luck, the Klostermann edition should be complete well before the turn of our century. Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein are approaching the (necessary) monumental. As the *Gesamtausgabe* is made available, as it enters philosophic debate and general sensibility, Heidegger's place will define itself.

I would suppose that his ontology, with its epistemological, anthropological, aesthetic and theological implications and applications will be seen to constitute the most inclusive attempt made in Western philosophy-social discourse to arrive at a completeness after God. I do not propose to enter into the extensive debate as to whether or not Heidegger's whole ontology is a "crypto-theology" in which *Sein* merely takes the place of "God". It is, I think, more useful to take Heidegger at his word. This is to see in his work an endeavour at a total but immanent "thinking through", "thinking about" the existential substance, meanings and values of human life. Heidegger's life-work may be grasped as the subtlest but also most forceful attempt yet made to "refuse transcendence" or, more exactly, to "de-mythologize transcendence" - here the great dialogue with Bultmann - by incarnating it, by substantiating it in a radiant immanence.

The future will be judge as to the success or failure of Heidegger's doctrine. But if they have failed, the implication may well be this: that given Western categories of meaning, of cognition and of utterance, no rigorously immanent, non- or post-theological understanding of existence is possible. For a thinker to have shown this, to have shown it, as it were, against himself, would be achievement enough.

*Details of the volumes of Heidegger's collected works reviewed in this article are as follows:*

BAND 1: FRÖHE SCHRIFTEN 44pp. 1978.

BAND 2: SEIN UND ZEIT 583pp. 1977.

BAND 5: HOLZWEGE 382pp. 1977.

BAND 9: WEGMARKEN 487pp. 1976.

BAND 20: PROLEGOMENA ZUR GESCHICHTE DES ZEITBEGRIFFS 447pp. 1979.

BAND 21: LOGIK, DIE FRAGE NACH DER WAHRHEIT 415pp. 1976.

BAND 24: DIE GRUNDPROBLEME DER PHÄNOMENOLOGIE 473pp. 1975.

BAND 25: PHÄNOMENOLOGISCHE INTERPRETATION VON KANTS KRITIK DER REINEN VERNUNFT 436pp. 1977.

BAND 26: METAPHYSISCHE ANFANGSGRÜNDE DER LOGIK 291pp. 1978.

BAND 32: HEGELS PHÄNOMENOLOGIE DES GEISTES 221pp. 1980.

BAND 33: ARISTOTELES, METAPHYSIK 1-3 227pp. 1981.

BAND 39: HÖLDERLINS HYMNEN "GERMANIEN" UND "DER RHEIN" 296pp. 1980.

BAND 55: HERAKLIT: 1. DER ANFANG DES ANSCHAUENDEN 2. DENKEN 2. LOGIK 3. HERAKLITS LEHRE VOM LOGOS 406pp. 1979.

# Dreams of being hurt

By Lorna Sage

IAN MCEWAN:  
*The Comfort of Strangers*  
134pp. Cape. £5.50.  
0 224 01931 7

Ian McEwan is often talked about as if he was a precocious talent - as if he was, somehow, unnaturally old for his years. Actually, though, what's most distinctive about his acrobatically perverse fictions is his refusal to grow up or suppress the fantasies of childhood, and it's this, I think, that has produced the impression of mutant youth. He is thirty-three after all, and he can still get his big toe in his mouth: a most disconcerting variant on writing tongue-in-cheek, especially when it's done with a cool economy of style.

Ordinary, full-size people have usually come off rather badly in his books. They loomed Brobdingnagian in the first two collections of stories ("brown tissues", old dogs, red eyes) and even in more naturalistic settings they are strikingly awful. In his first novel, *The Cement Garden*, there was one called Derek who might have blossomed into quite a "character" in some more congenial context - he's a dandy and a professional snooker player - but who's merely a cardboard adult and moral policeman in the world McEwan contrives. Derek - all Derek's - are the reality principle in disguise, the ones who woo your big sister (for instance) and interrupt your incestuous idyll.

As I closed my lips around Julie's nipple a soft shudder ran through her body, and a voice from across the room said mournfully, "Now I've seen it all."

It's also Derek, naturally, who finds what's in the cellar, and puts an end to the squalid rapture of childhood without parents.

However, his main role is to deflect the reader's "moral" responses. Who would be a Derek? Well, some would like the BBC Television Drama Head who banned a McEwan play on the eve of production (*Solid Geometry*, 1979) because of its "grotesque and bizarre sexual elements". But most wouldn't.

In other words, Ian McEwan has exactly touched the obscure nerve that registers "newness" in English fiction, and it may be a measure of the oddness of the cultural climate - it ought to be a measure of something - that this is all about regression. One of the most memorable lines from his first book of stories, *First Love, Last Rites* (which won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1975) was "I want to climb in the pram". It helped that his figures were never messily confessional, but impersonally weird. The incestuous, onanistic, transvestite, infantile monsters he imagines belong, as Paul Bailey wrote, to "the recognizable world of private fantasy and nightmare - a world, despite our protestations to the contrary, we are all involved in". There haven't though, except at BBC Television (haunted, one imagines, by the thought of Mary Whitehouse) been many "protestations". This is, in part, a tribute to McEwan's persuasive strategies, for he has had from the beginning that instinct for protecting and presenting his own talent that does sometimes seem - as in the case of Philip Roth to accompany obsessive nasty habits.

This might sound like another writer altogether, but it was the "old" one (acrobatics again) turned inside out: ATS Cathy as big sister; her useless lover, a member of the Ultra inner circle who finds her sexiness obscene and her curiosity treasonable, as an even wetter Derek. What's missing is "I", the brother/child/lover, who obviously has trouble in the land of Derek's (and in getting on television). There may be a connection between wanting to sleep with your sister and Women's Liberation, in short, but *The Cement Garden* doesn't make it. McEwan's new novel, *The Comfort of Strangers*, does, and if I seem to be approaching it via an inordinate preamble, that's because its interest and its problems are very much to do with Ian McEwan's search for ways of "placing" private fantasy in a context of public issues. That he

What she produces, after long labour, is an exact reproduction of her first book, every word in its place. This kind of nightmare, fed doubtless by critical acclaim, must have made growth or development even more problematic than they would anyway be for a writer whose essential material was immaturity. It can't have helped, either, that his first venture away from short stories, *The Cement Garden* (short, but a novel) irresistibly reminded Anthony Thwaite and some other reviewers of another novel years before, which had a similar plot about happy families. As indeed you might expect, given the amorphous, un-individual nature of fantasy life - private fantasies are common property.

Ironically enough, it seems to have been television that provided a clue to the path he's following now - not the trouble with *Solid Geometry* (based anyway on an early short story) but the experience of writing *The Cement Garden*, a play broadcast last year. McEwan's own account of the matter is uncharacteristically explicit:

I felt I had written myself into too tight a corner; I had made deliberate use of material too restricted to allow me to write about the ideas that had interested me for some years. The Women's Movement had presented ways of looking at the world, both its present and its past, that were at once profoundly dislocating and infinite in possibility. I wanted to write a novel which would assume as its background a society classed by a set of economic classes but a patriarchy. The English class system, its pervasiveness, its endless subtleties, had once been a rich source for the English novel: men and women have to do with each other in ways economic classes do not. Patriarchy corrupts our most intimate relationships with comic and tragic consequences.

... But my narrators were frequently too idiosyncratic or solipsistic to allow me the freedom to explore.

What emerged from these ruminations was not, immediately, a novel, but *The Cement Garden* which, despite its title, got him out of his solipsistic and self-conscious corner into the (comparatively) breezy climate of sexual politics. Its setting, in 1940, provided - just - a link back to childhood ("the war ... was a living presence throughout my childhood. Sometimes I found it hard to believe I had not been alive in the summer of 1940") but the central figure was an ATS girl, and the structure was not dictated by private fantasy, but by the organization of the "Ultra" project for breaking German codes at Bletchley Park. An army of women transcribed unintelligible signals, and fed them at Bletchley through proto-computers, while a central core of men jealously guarded their "official secrets" and actually broke the code. It was a splendid microcosm of the equivocal freedoms the war offered women, and by this accident of built-in symbolism, the play could be, on the surface, entirely naturalistic.

When they looked at each other they looked into a misted mirror. When they talked of the politics of sex, which she did sometimes, they did not talk of themselves. It was precisely this collusion that made them vulnerable and sensitive to each other, easily hurt by the rediscovery that their needs and interests were distinct.

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should be engaged so deliberately in such a search is a symptom of a familiar contemporary dilemma - there being no automatic context, the tradition of social realism being ruinous and uninhabitable, and so on.

*The Comfort of Strangers* is set in Venice, a decaying labyrinth, and an appropriate place for the placeless. Mary and Colin get lost every time they leave their hotel, and their mutually apologetic wanderings isolate them neatly in their semi-detached relationship:

Alone, perhaps, they could have explored the city with pleasure. ... But they knew each other much as they knew themselves, and their intimacy, rather like too many suitcases, was a matter of perpetual concern; together they moved slowly, clumsily, effecting ludicrous compromises.

Mary has been married, has children she's left behind to go on holiday; her affair with Colin is a near-androgynous conspiracy; they don't live together, theirs is "no longer a great passion".

When they looked at each other they looked into a misted mirror. When they talked of the politics of sex, which she did sometimes, they did not talk of themselves. It was precisely this collusion that made them vulnerable and sensitive to each other, easily hurt by the rediscovery that their needs and interests were distinct.

This composite "person" is a splendid comic characterization of the liberated couple; there's no "I"; Colin is described physically (his slowness, his baby-soft curls and so on); Mary is riot, but does strenuous Yoga and can swim a lot further; "they" fit together perfectly.

Something has to go wrong, but before that happens it goes blissfully suddenly right. They've been picked up in their wanderings by a driftless couple. One half is garrulous, Italian Robert, who regales them with his macabre family history (how he came to hate his sisters), his views on men ("My father and his father ... were proud of the sex. ... Now men doubt themselves, they hate themselves") and on women ("They lie to themselves. They talk of freedom, and dream of captivity"). When Robert takes them home to meet his brown-tinted Canadian wife Caroline, they're at first merely embarrassed and distressed to see sado-masochism flourishing so routinely, but when they get back to their hotel, they find their own relationship has taken on a new erotic urgency. Locked away together for days, they embark on a complex and incestuous (or nearly, they're so close) sexual odyssey - a tireless celebration of intertwined lives and fantasies, so different (they're rather complacent about this) from the prison of sex they've glimpsed in Robert and Caroline. They talk endlessly, too, even about themselves, and are full of passionate curiosity.

What they don't talk about is the matter of Robert and Caroline. But gradually things about that encounter surface to consciousness - suggestions hidden from themselves and each other: Robert punching Colin in a way that wasn't playful, Caroline's whispered entreaties, and most ominously and inexplicably, a grainy, much-enlarged photograph among Robert's trophies that, Mary's now convinced, was of Colin, though it can't be, they've never met before. ... These buried memories take them back to the nightmare couple, and back into the perverse history of sexual cruelty they were so sure they'd transcended. Their rediscovery of each other has opened up an ancient chamber of horrors, and the novel's climactic scenes, in which Robert and Caroline take their kind of "pleasure", have an appropriate sense of *déjà vu*, watching a foul old dream unfold itself - which I shan't enhance by telling the story any further.

The central tension (in part an equivocation, I think) is about how far Colin and Mary invite their fate: by being too close, too innocent of violence? by repressing their aggressions, and so secretly wanting horrors? Mary has all big sister's erotic trapped as sexily childlike (which is why of course they get on so well), but is an idyll what they want, or is it something nastier - which is certainly what they get? A rather over-acted planted clue during their paradisaical spell - a set of uneasy "jokes" about mutilation and bondage - suggests that Ian McEwan wants us at least to toy with the idea that they're working out their own fantasies all along. Mary's final, numbered monologues tries for a "correct" view -

... the sexual imagination, men's ancient dreams of hurting, and women's of being hurt, embodied and declared a powerful single organizing principle, which distorted all relations ...

... but Mary (mother/sister/lover) hasn't shown much sign of dreaming "of being hurt", though Colin has. What I'm saying, I suppose, is that the solipsistic logic of dream desires and fears, and the theories about patriarchy, overlap uneasily. Loving one's sister may be a way of flirting with father, even in dreams begin responsibilities, and hideous Robert is a lot more powerful and interesting than the Dereks.

*The Comfort of Strangers* is not as claustrophobic as this would suggest - quite. I should before ending offer a longer quotation, a quiet "outside" scene that performs an elegant variation on the theme of spontaneity and role-playing:

Now and then a couple stopped to stare approvingly at the customers on the pontoon drinking against their gigantic backcloth of sunset and reddened water. One elderly gentleman positioned half-kneeling, with thin, trembling thighs, to take a picture. The drinkers at a table immediately behind the woman raised their glasses good-naturedly towards the camera. But the photographer, intent on spontaneity, straightened and, with a sweeping gesture of his free hand, tried to usher them back on the path of their self-conscious existence.

But now his wife ... was turning her back to the camera in order to encourage the last ray of the sun into her handbag. Her husband called to her sharply and she moved smartly back into position. The closing snap of the handbag clasp brought the young men to life. They arranged themselves in their seats, lifted their glasses once more and made broad, innocent smiles ...

When he does a cool, comic vignette like this so well, it's hard to see why McEwan should have problems getting out of his corner, and tempting one to think that he shouldn't bother his head with sexual politics. I don't think so, though this novel seems to me dislocated in ways he didn't intend. It will be interesting to see whether the readers who've enjoyed his polymorphous fantasies will now read him as he reads himself, as an explorer of patriarchy, or whether they'll want him to climb back in the pram.

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# Emblems of the emotions

By Italo Calvino

The World of Donald Evans  
Text by Willy Eisenhart  
174pp. New York: Harlin Quist.  
\$16.95.  
0 8252 9650 0

All his life Donald Evans made postage stamps. Imaginary stamps from imaginary countries, drawn in pencil or coloured ink and painted in water colours, but scrupulously faithful to everything one expects from a postage stamp, to the point of seeming, at a first glance, genuine. He would invent the name of a country, a unit of currency and a repertoire of characteristic images, then begin meticulously to fill in the little squares or rectangles (or sometimes triangles) framed by a perforated white border, in whole series, each series with its own year of issue and period style, each value of its own pale shade, chosen from the range of colours normal on stamps.

There was nothing science-fictional or utopian or extravagant about it: the countries of his imaginary atlas resemble the countries which exist in reality, having merely become more familiar and manageable, wholly identified with a limited number of reassuring emblems. Evans also invented the names of capital cities and made himself a circular rubber pad for cancelling the stamps so that the resemblance to real stamps was even more convincing. Sometimes the composition would also include the envelope, with postmark, and the address written in an invented hand - the names of persons and places being likewise invented but always plausible.

A fascination with stamps always starts in childhood, inspired by a passion both for the exotic and for the systematic. From the time he was a small boy Donald Evans, who came from New Jersey, spent from collecting stamps, began to invent new ones of his own, that is he invented a history and a geography parallel to those of the world as recognized by others. As he grew up Evans never entirely abandoned this youthful passion, even though he kept quiet about the painting he practised while he was a student of architecture, almost as if he were ashamed of it. This was in New York at the end of the 1950s, at a time when abstract expressionism held undisputed sway. Later the advent of Pop Art convinced Evans that his early predilection for the figurative was in tune with the most up-to-date artistic

developments. The way was open to launch himself as a successful painter; but the one thing that interested him was to lead a quiet life doing what he liked best. In the 1970s he did nothing but paint stamps, about 4,000 of them, divided amongst forty-two imaginary countries; he held an exhibition once a year but spent as little time as possible in New York. He lived almost wholly in Europe, mostly in Holland, up until the fire in Amsterdam which cost him his life at the age of only thirty-one. This splendid book which has been my own introduction to Evans is proof that a circle of friends and connoisseurs has devoted a cult to his person and his work as if to the memory of a saint.

Evans's short life (1945-77) has been meticulously reconstructed and his work meticulously examined by Willy Eisenhart in an introduction to the eighty-five colour plates, which are arranged like a stamp-collector's album with the imaginary countries in alphabetical order. This collection of stamps is at the same time a collection of hens, of windmills, of airships, of chairs, of palm-trees, of butterflies and all sorts of other fauna and flora ("Fauna and Flora", indeed, is the name of a federal kingdom figuring who knows where in Evans's geography, though certainly in some northern region). Evans in fact loves classifications - nomenclatures, catalogues, sample-books; and how better to express this serial passion than in sets of stamps? "Catalogue of the World" is the title he himself proposed giving to his oeuvre.

Other pages display a sheet of stamps all identical and as yet undivided along the perforated lines. Others still display collections which attempt to reconstitute this original sheet by aligning identical stamps, but these are differentiated from one another by the black shadow of the postmark or irregularities in the edging. (Evans took particular trouble over imitating these indentations, or their absence in those series portraying earlier periods, before perforating machines were invented). Nor are more abstract combinations lacking, such as the dominos in the very elegant stamps of the "Etat Domino", or the Scottish tartans of "Antique", painted in honour of a girl whose family came from Scotland.

Eisenhart sees this philatelic fixation as arising from Evan's introverted character. I would say that what drove him was the need to keep a diary of

states of mind, feelings, positive experience and values, synthesized into emblematic objects; through the nostalgic vision of the stamp album these inner states are objectified, brought under the control of his conscious mind by being ordered into a system, by the ironic invention and attribution of names, and by the subtle melancholy of these pale landscapes, repeated in so many different shades.

Creating stamps was for Donald Evans above all a way of appropriating the countries he visited and the places he lived in. His adopted land of Holland was the inspiration for the stamps of "Achterdijk" (Behind the dyke, from his first Dutch address) and "Nadorp" (After the village, from the address of a friend), in which he expresses his love for the flat landscapes, the various shapes of windmill and even for the Dutch language. The stamps of "Barcentrum" - from the name of a bar Evans frequented in Amsterdam - are in brighter colours: a beautiful sequence which is also a list of drinks from the New York streets as models for this work and lent Evans his apartment. The *Chaises d'Oeuvres Nationaux*, which this set commemorates, puns with "chef d'oeuvre" and the capital of Welsbecker, "Vanupieds", which is printed in the postmark, means "Bare-foot Vagabond". The currency of the country Evans named after his friend and his cat, there being one hundred Philos to one Welsbecker franc. The extra ten Philos added to the stamps' face value at the bottom reflects standard philatelic practice with special souvenir sheets. The illustration is taken from the book reviewed here.

Other names belong to a geography of the feelings: "Licham" and "Geest" (body and soul in Dutch) are twin kingdoms of the far North with a currency in common - the "ijs", or ice - as well as stamps - showing seals and whales. Two African islands are called "Amis et Amants" and make up one of the countries to emerge from the decolonization of a former French protectorate, the "Royaume de Calu-da". To begin with, these newly independent states continue to use the sad stamps of the old colony, over-printed; then the "Postes des Iles Amis et Amants" issue a new set of local scenes called "Coup de Poudre", "Premières Amours" or "La Passade".

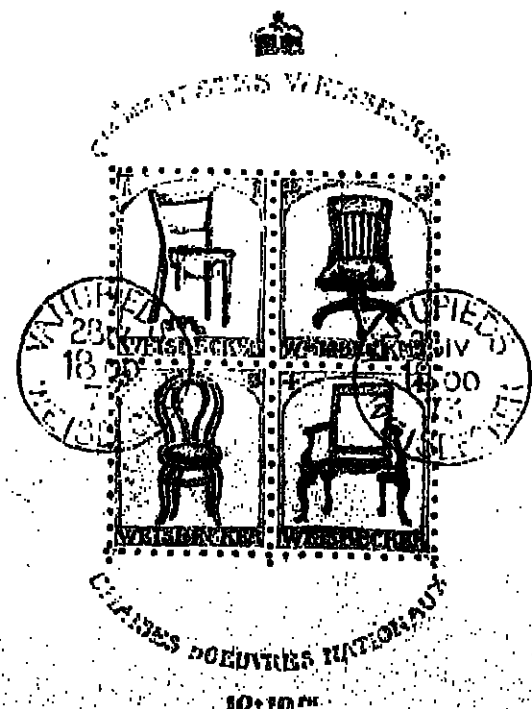
But it is above all through food that Evans establishes his relationship with countries, having absorbed during his travels their most characteristic tastes and aromas. After a trip to Italy he invents a new country, "Mangiare", whose currency is calculated in grams

and whose very graceful stamps are a museum of vegetables, fruit and herbs - from peas, capers, pine-kernels, olives (images picked out with elegant borders round them), to marrow-flowers, rosemary, celery and broccoli. "Lo Stato di Mangiare" devotes a special issue to the recipe for *pesto alla genovese* with its basic ingredients (basil, pine kernels, pecorino cheese, garlic). Another series, dated 1927, exalts the cucumber in the shape of an airship. During the Second World War the Stato di Mangiare is invaded by the army of Antipazio, and the stamps of the Occupied Zone are overprinted. After the war one region of Mangiare, called Pasta, achieves self-government and the "poste Paste" issue a series that is a splendid sample of varieties of pasta.

Even this expatriate American's nostalgia for his two country focuses on visions of the edible: on fruit. The evocative sheets devoted to a country called "My Bonnie" ("My Bonnie lies

over the ocean", as the song has it) are dotted with apparently identical cherry-trees, except each one is a different shade of red and has a different name taken from a horticultural catalogue.

In fact this supposed introvert was by no means a man turned in on himself but one who looked outwards at the objects of the world, which he selected, recognized and nominated one by one with a loving delicacy and precision. Probably the aspect of postage stamps which most interested him was their celebratory function: he wanted to substitute for the official, programmed and bureaucratic attempts at celebration of the world's postal authorities a private ritual of celebration, of the commemoration of tiny encounters, of the consecration of unique and irreplaceable things: a sprig of basil, a butterfly, an olive. Without the illusion of rescuing them from the flux of time, which rapidly transforms sets of stamps into vestiges of the past.



Donald Evans used the name of the illustrator Philippe Weisbecker for that of the imaginary country of origin of this set of stamps, "National chaises. Block of four in souvenir sheet" (1973). Weisbecker had collected four chairs from the New York streets as models for this work and lent Evans his apartment. The *Chaises d'Oeuvres Nationaux*, which this set commemorates, puns with "chef d'oeuvre" and the capital of Welsbecker, "Vanupieds", which is printed in the postmark, means "Bare-foot Vagabond". The currency of the country Evans named after his friend and his cat, there being one hundred Philos to one Welsbecker franc. The extra ten Philos added to the stamps' face value at the bottom reflects standard philatelic practice with special souvenir sheets. The illustration is taken from the book reviewed here.

## The Portrait Game

(after Turgenev)

A florid old cherub,  
the Silenus of a library -  
its most benign spirit.  
He comes every day,  
huffing and shuffling.  
You hear him round the corner,  
when forgetfully he whistles  
two soft watery notes.  
In love with books, he clatters  
perilous foot steps  
to pluck the furthest prizes,  
the heaviest and rarest.  
Volumos lo! where he's been.  
Spreadeagled on the top  
of a mahogany cabinet  
(like a tomb for gilt folios),  
a lexicon lies open:  
with his fulvous middle finger  
he strokes its clef.

I don't like the look  
of this fellow.  
He ought to be jolly,  
but in fact he's a bully,  
pettish, pampered  
like a Roman emperor.  
Nose as porous  
as a sore old strawberry.  
Lips, maroon and rubbery.  
A challenging rhino's amble  
to and from the table  
where he drinks nine pints a night.  
He tells his mates what's what,  
and they laugh when he does.  
Married? Never was.  
Works as foreman  
in a yard stacked with rusting drums -  
most days by the gate,  
tormenting his gums  
with a chipped matchstick;  
sulky, obtuse,  
but quick to be sarcastic.

He's a farm-labourer,  
a sturdy perfectionist.  
Day after day he endures  
the fug of the henhouse,  
where he patiently rehearses  
the complex gobbledeygook  
of his own hen Symphony.

In a gust of garlic,  
Moroccan or Turkish,  
the smug patron  
of a Soho restaurant.  
He runs it well,  
with napkins as natty  
as the headgear of nurses,  
outlandish implements  
for all our rack-handed  
operations on snails.  
He talks to every table,  
condescending and banal.  
If you ask for champagne,  
he comes himself  
to ease out the mushroom,  
then shoves the bottle  
back into its pall  
of icy rubble.  
He hardly ever smiles,  
but, then, exactly  
how many murders  
have been committed  
on the mere silent say-so  
of those tawny teeth?

An abject busker,  
though he was once a soldier,  
who, in a seep  
near the Equator,  
possessed a young girl  
as glossy as an aubergine,  
with a curious perfume  
both fecal and sweet.  
A cap like a puddle  
now lies at his feet,  
to receive the odd penny.  
He wheedles his harmonica -  
a horrible sound.

Christopher Reid

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## Irrationally across the ice

By Clive Sinclair

CHARLES NEIDER:

Beyond Cape Horn  
Travels in the Antarctic  
387pp. Sierra Club Books. \$16.95.  
0 87156 233 2

Charles Neider is probably best known as Mark Twain's most industrious editor. Others might recognize him as the author of *The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones*, a novel of Old California, which Marlon Brando filmed as *One-Eyed Jacks*. Among those who have praised his fiction are Saul Bellow, E. M. Forster, and Thomas Mann. Neider's oeuvre also embraces *Susy: A Childhood*, a description of his daughter's first four years, and *The Frozen Sea*, a psychological study of Kafka. What a distance there seems between Kafka, who dreamed in his diary (January 19, 1922) of the "Infinite deep, warm, saving happiness of sitting beside the cradle of one's child, opposite its mother", and his explicated, who actually sat beside his daughter's cradle, but so as to record her every word. In a sense Neider has actually turned Kafka's self-absorption inside out.

The title *The Frozen Sea* is extracted from one of Kafka's aphorisms: "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us". It is in

some ways a prophetic title, for *Beyond Cape Horn* is Neider's third book about Antarctica. Why the fascination? Is it that he regards the frozen sea of the south as the world's sleeping subconscious? This is how Neider explains it in the book:

I had been invited on occasion to go to the Arctic, but after Antarctica I had no desire to go north. There were more than a million indigenous human residents north of the Arctic Circle. There were none south of the Antarctic Circle and never had been. There were polar bears and other animals north of the Arctic Circle. Aside from a few bird species, the only animals south of the Antarctic Circle were in the sea, and the birds had to live off the sea or die. It was precisely the continent's extremes that drew me to it, and the fact that it was not only pre-human, but probably pre-mammalian as well fascinated me. *Beyond Cape Horn* is no ice-breaker; on the contrary, it is a plea to let sleeping dogs lie. Neider speaks up for Antarctica, argues that its awe-inspiring terrain should be left unexplored for the good of mankind. At the moment the only inhabitants of the continent are scientists, among whom Neider was something of an anomaly, being "the only literary writer and humanist working in the Antarctic". While the scientists' cordoned minutiae, according to their

specialties, Neider attempted to encompass the whole with his eye.

Neider's eye is a precision instrument. His descriptions are not impressions, but verbal equivalents of the scintillating colour photographs that illuminate the book:

When one turned one's head one experienced a tremendous sweep of space, and within the framework of this relatively monochromatic world there was the excitement of color: the sweet blue of the zenith, the lime above the horizon, the lavender, lilac, and prune in the lee itself, the slate blues of islands and mountains. The sea ice was a fiery mirror. The water rushing down the hillside gleamed like a stream of mercury.

According to Neider, Kafka's K was a scopophilic - a voyeur or observer - "too cerebral to accept the (irrational). Neider, likewise, is an observer, whether disguised as Doc Baker, narrator of *The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones*, or as himself, noting his daughter's development from behind a two-way mirror. At the conclusion of the scene quoted above Neider discovers that the landscape had "worked profoundly" on him, so that he "felt in love with something or someone". "Also, I felt loved, blessed, graced. 'Lord, Lord, I kept saying to myself: how lucky I am to be here, and my eyes filled with tears. But why? The reader, far removed from

the place itself, feels envious and slightly cheated. It is as though Neider has been moved by a great work of art but can't get others to share his feeling. As he himself puts it after another excursion: "How to describe the joy?" Neider is a kind of Lord of Creation: he sees, he writes, and Antarctica exists. But the dazzling beauty of the prose conceals a failure, not unlike K's.

Neider is prepared to take all manner of risks in getting to know Antarctica, but its ultimate meaning remains obscure. At one point he is tempted by the "pure glasslike quality" of the water to remove his clothes and jump in, his body "seemingly aching to be immersed in this soothingly cold liquid" as if with a fever "of mysterious origin". I wondered what would happen if I gave in to my imagining. But then I thought of the water's extraordinary temperature and of my considerable chronological age and how embarrassing it would be if I had a heart attack and became a burden to my hosts, and how much our behaviour is based on fear of being an embarrassment, and how many good people, Ernest Hemingway among them, have killed themselves rather than endure this fear.

Neider's only speculation upon his own identity produces imagery curiously at odds with Antarctica's My name . . . neither looked nor

sounded "American" (it's pronounced Nyder, not Needer). I was foreign-born (Odessa, Russia) and although I had never been Jewish in any real sense despite my having had a Bar Mitzvah, with all the Hebrew lessons it entailed, I was sufficiently Jewish origin (both my parents were Jewish), to have been killed by the Germans during the Holocaust had I been available, and I had close relatives who had been slain by them. My paternal grandparents, elderly people in Bessarabia, who had refused to flee the town of Akkerman because they were unable to believe the stories of German atrocities, had been locked in a synagogue together with other Jews and been burned to death.

In going beyond Cape Horn, Neider has found a metaphor for creation, one in which man is not the crown. Perhaps the most memorable scene in this excellent book is Neider's encounter with some killer whales, who perform a "fantastic water ballet" between blocks of ice. Here the requirement to take photographs gives way to the need to engrave the scenes on his memory: "I have the uncanny sense that something mysterious and about which they know more than I is occurring between us, that perhaps they're ironically amused by me, the puny figure with fiercely red top, my parka. . . . Again that word 'mysterious'. Doff your parka, Neider, and take the plunge!



# The Polish connection

By Peter Hebblethwaite

GEORGE HUNTSTON WILLIAMS:

*The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* 415pp. New York: Seabury Press. \$24.95. 0 8164 0473 1

The John Paul II industry shows no sign of recession, even though publishers are becoming more choosy. The full effects of the attempted assassination of May 13 have yet to be seen. Meanwhile, George Huntston Williams' contribution is original, well researched and ecumenical in intent. It has no competitors.

His starting-point is that John Paul's pontificate "may best be understood by what he was before he became pontiff". It is the Polish background that alone can provide the interpretative key or keys. Williams is right. And he is better equipped than most to deal with this background: a theologian and the historian of Post-Reformation Poland, he spent a semester at the Catholic University of Lublin in 1972, where he was an academic colleague of Karol Wojtyla; he has an interest in "contingential" philosophy and Spanish mysticism - required for dealing with the Pope's Max Scheler; and finally, he was an "alternate" observer at Vatican Council II (1962-65), where he met and talked with the young Archbishop of Kraków.

So this is not a biography in any conventional sense. It is something much more urgently needed: an account of the intellectual and cultural milieu out of which John Paul II emerged to startle the world. It is valuable as an introduction to the Polish romantic literature in which Wojtyla, a poet himself, was steeped. Let me give three examples, from different fields, of the way

Williams throws new light on his subject.

In 1906 there was in Poland a schismatic group of married priests characterized by a strong devotion to Mary (the Mariavites). A visionary nun, Felicia Kozłowska, held them in thrall. She was known as "Mama" and eventually as "Maria". She believed in (first) spiritual and (then) carnal marriages between priests and nuns, with the latter distributing the Eucharist as equal partners. Hearing of these developments, Pius X promptly excommunicated the Mariavites who took refuge with the Old Catholics in 1909.

Now Pope John Paul yields to none in his devotion to Mary. But he would have remembered the warning example of the Mariavites when confronted by priests who wished to marry or nuns who wished to become priests. Sister Theresa Kane, who gently approached him on the question of women's ordination in Washington in October, 1979, did not realize the ghosts that she was conjuring up. On the other hand, John Paul draws close to the Mariavites in one respect. Out of sensitivity towards Orthodox beliefs, he omitted the *Filioque* from the creed. Back from his sickbed last Whitsunday, the Pope omitted the *Filioque* from the creed (and for the same reason).

Another extremely illuminating passage concerns Adam Sapieha, who spotted Wojtyla as a schoolboy and became his model of the priesthood. He was known as "Prince" Sapieha because he was a prince by birth and, as Archbishop of Kraków, a prince of the Church. He was a throwback to a vanished world. As a student at the Jesuit University of Innsbruck before the First World War, Sapieha was one of the young noblemen who arrived "in their regional dress with stately retinues and sometimes their own chaplains". He quickly became a bishop, and on one occasion told the papal nuncio, Achille Ratti, to depart

when he unexpectedly turned up for a meeting of the Polish bishops. This proved to be unwise, for shortly afterwards Ratti became Pope Pius XI, and he never forgave Sapieha. Williams suggests that Pius's ban on prelates being involved in politics was directed against Sapieha, who sat in the Sejm as a member of the National Democratic Party. And he links this with John Paul's refusal to stand for re-election to the US Congress in 1980. But he does not draw the other conclusion from the Sapieha affair. The notion that the Polish bishops, in their fierce loyalty to the Holy See, always had a harmonious relationship with the Vatican, is a fairy tale. Until Wojtyla was elected pope in 1978 they were usually at odds with the Vatican and felt badly misunderstood.

A third example of how jiggling away at the past throws light on Wojtyla's present is fresh information on Max Scheler, on whom he wrote his "Habilitation" thesis. Scheler is conventionally presented as a "Catholic phenomenologist" and a disciple of Edmund Husserl. The truth is more complicated. A Catholic convert from Judaism at an early age, he was expelled from the University of Munich in 1910 for unspecified "moral turpitude". Proceeding to Göttingen in order to sit at the feet of Husserl, he annoyed the master by being a more brilliant lecturer and gathering more pupils. After a spell in the Black Forest during the First World War, he was reconverted to Catholicism and wrote propaganda tracts in which he claimed that the Central Powers (Kraków was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) were defending "Christian civilization" against the hordes of English shopkeepers, who had never had a spiritual thought in their lives, against a Russian autocracy supported by a tame and subservient Orthodox Church. By 1923 Scheler was on to his third marriage, and

Wojtyla pays no attention to his subsequent work. But it could be that his suspicion of Britain (where he has never been) and of the United States harks back to this period. The attacks on "consumerism" are another version of the unspiritual shopkeeper thesis.

These are examples of how Williams uses the folk-memory or cultural antecedents to explain what would otherwise be puzzling. Of course there is no precise correlation, and one is free up to a point to do what one likes with a cultural inheritance, but they are illuminating.

The author is on less sure ground when it comes to strictly philosophical themes. Labels are slapped on with abandon. What does it mean to call Sartre "a personalist existentialist"? To suggest that Garriou-Lagrange was "the most distinguished authority in Christendom", or that François Mauriac and Graham Greene were "associated with situation ethics"? Though "phenomenology" is admittedly not easy to define, how helpful is it to say that "it sought to develop a valid methodology for mirroring a given reality in its essence and making it possible to presume its existence"? It is impossible to decide whether Williams takes Wojtyla's contribution to philosophy seriously. "The goal of *The Acting Person*", he solemnly tells us, "is to show that man is a person". On the contrary, that is its starting-point, its presupposition. The most devastating criticisms are mentioned quite casually: "Wojtyla's experience of truth is never disclosed... to the bafflement of the reader". Precisely. But if one cannot "redo the exercise", this philosophical style, lacking in examples, arguments and clearly stated alternative positions, becomes so much polysyllabic pomp.

Even more uncertain is Williams's handling of events in the Vatican after the election. These are seen from a distance and at third-hand. It is astonishing to read that

Archbishop Deskur "reigns over 300 journalists" in the Vatican Press Office. He has not been seen in Rome since the pontificate began. He is convalescing in Switzerland. In any case, the notion of "ruling over" these turbulent individualists is a touching fantasy. The Dutch Synod of January, 1981, did not concern Flemish-speaking Belgium. Williams does not appear to know that Father M. Molinski, who was unwise enough to write a book called *My Friend Karol Wojtyla*, has been brutally disavowed. Nor is it true that we "do not have his [Wojtyla's] speeches at the plenary sessions" of the Synod: they have been published in Latin and Italian in a stout volume.

But despite these and many other errors of detail, Williams is excellent in his conclusion when he returns to "the papal transformation of Polish messianism". This is his strength. His book will be a valuable quarry for others. His value judgments are advanced with proper Protestant diffidence. "It would appear", he writes, "that the Pope perceives an urgent need for imposing, by a combination of persuasive good will and calculated severity, a greater degree of unity than Pope Paul saw fit to impose on the Church". The Pope "instinctively finds repugnant the presence of seething discussions on social issues or theological disputes". It is probably easier for a Roman Catholic to say more bluntly that John Paul II cannot brook disagreement.

*Scott on Himself: A Selection of the Autobiographical Writings of Sir Walter Scott* has recently been published by Scottish University Press for the Association for Scottish Literary Studies (298pp, £6.75). The editor, David Hewitt, has assembled selections from Scott's correspondence with Lady Abercorn, Lady Louisa Stuart, John Morritt and others, together with extended extracts from the *Journal* (1825-26).

# Big is terrible

By Morris Philippon

THOMAS WHITESIDE:

*The Blockbuster Complex: Conglomerates, Show Business, and Book Publishing*

207pp. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press. \$16.80. 0 8195 5057 4

Mr Thomas Whiteside, on the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine, has written an analytic description of American commercial publishing as it has changed in the past twenty years; this is a contribution to business or economic history - a dispassionate, objective account of an outrageous situation. The effect on the reader is an appalled sense of loss regarding the life of the spirit - and a justified anxiety for the future of literary culture in the United States. The business history is a success story. It demonstrates how, in the course of the past two decades, "management" has introduced new methods in order to increase the financial profits of commercial publishing, at the price of narrowing the range of books made available to the public, and by catering to the lust for vulgarity which characterizes the new book-buyers. Business booms: the only losers are the majority of authors or aspiring writers, and all intelligent general readers.

A "blockbuster" book - deadly metaphor from the bomb that destroys everything within its scope - is the passionately desired object, the singular means to huge financial returns which has emerged as the object of worship, the key to monetary success, as a result of the "complex" of factors Whiteside enumerates as the strands in the noose around the neck of literary life in the United States today.

Up to 1959, the American book-

publishing business could have been described as a "... gentlemanly way of life. It may not have been considered a particularly profitable business, or a notably efficient one, but it was a business in which publishers and editors could feel sustained not only by their love of books but also by their sense of professional independence". At the end of the 1950s unattractive changes began to appear; but they followed from actions taken for the very opposite reasons. It was primarily in order to assure the continued independence of Random House and to protect the firm against the possibly devastating effects of estate-tax regulations, that Donald Klopfer and Bennett Cerf decided to establish its value by offering a public stock issue. It was the first of the privately owned publishing houses to be listed on Wall Street. For similar reasons, to protect the integrity and continuity of their firm, Blanche and Alfred A. Knopf, in the spring of 1960, merged Knopf with Random House. The value of the stock of the merged company began to rise - without any necessary relationship to actual increases in sales.

What happened, by the mid-1960s, was that various large electronics companies became interested in publishing houses, because it appeared as if, with federal aid-to-education programmes under President Johnson, there would be a boom in electronically oriented systems of "teaching machines" for public schools; and publishers of text-books controlled the "software". It is doubtful whether the executives of such electronics companies were even aware of the trade-book divisions of publishing firms. But the dream of technology supplementing or substituting for human teachers evaporated; federal funds for education shrank as the war in Vietnam

escalated. Nevertheless, by then, RCA had acquired Random House, CBS had bought Holt, Rinehart and Winston; and Time, Inc. had bought the Book-of-the-Month Club. Other firms merged, even if they were not taken over subsequently by a conglomerate, and "... their owners and managers found that although they still controlled the companies... the kinds of decisions that they had been used to making... were likely to be tempered by considerations they had never before had to reckon with". They were beholden to the owners of their stock; they felt obliged to become more efficient in order to be more profitable. Even at a time when all of their expenses, from overheads to the inflation of paper, printing, and binding costs were increasing, the monies available to them from their conglomerate owners made possible the escalation of competitive bidding for popular writers with ever larger amounts of "advances" - ie, payments to authors in advance not only of royalties earned but often in advance of the book being written. The rationale for such speculative investments was the reasonable hope that the return on the investment out of subsidiary rights - for paperback reprints, film rights, TV licences, etc. - would be ample reward. The rich would get richer. No one can be credited with the presence of having recognized at that time, the late 1960s, that the increasing emphasis on the big book, the "Blockbuster", because of the fortunes that lay in subsidiary rights, would bring about a transformation in publishing procedures, judgment, and economics. Whiteside shows that "the communications-entertainment world" is now the tail that wags the publishing dog. What was once a "subsidiary" or secondary benefit following the investment in the decision to publish a book has become either the determining factor or the

originating source regarding that decision itself.

"One sign of this sort of adaptation is that, as time goes on, the language of the corporate merchandiser seems ever more a part of the workaday speech of book publishers and editors. Indeed, much of what publishers and editors are doing is becoming ever more closely entangled with what advertising men, television producers and talk-show hosts, and Hollywood producers and packagers are doing". And it is all meretricious. The successful author is an unpaid actor advertising a "product" by television and radio appearances to promote sales by discussing what his or her book is "about" with an interviewer who has certainly not read the work. The chain stores which thrive on high-volume sales of hard-cover books, quick turnover of stock, computerized systems of accounting and inventory control have a greater impact on the "marketability" of a book than any editor's investment of belief in the value of a literary work. Wholesaling distributors of paperback reprints have a similar stranglehold on which books are given "rack space". The whole process - of a worthwhile book becoming successful in respect to subsidiary rights subsequent to publication in hard cover - has been reversed to the point that "actual authorship often becomes an ancillary consideration in... the spontaneous generation of a literary property" which "... occurs around a conference table in the office of a producer or an agent" in Los Angeles.




If these are non-traditional methods, they are nevertheless justified by the new owners. What they want is not unreasonable. "They had paid large sums to acquire the publishing houses, and that money was supposed to be recouped again, in an

orderly way. Given the vast resources of the conglomerates and their experience with and understanding of modern merchandising techniques, a determined program of seeking out, buying, and promoting best-sellers seemed to be the surest way for the acquired companies to exert their new economic clout and capture dominant shares in the trade-book market". But the effect on writers, as well as on editors, is to polarize both classes into the entrepreneurs and the litterateurs. The rich get richer; the poor may well drop out of the scene. Good books that several years ago would have been licensed for a few thousand dollars for a paperback reprint are no longer given "a second chance"; the rich paperback reprint can't afford to acquire twenty books a year for five thousand dollars apiece when he has invested over a million dollars for one blockbuster; and the wholesalers won't take the "little" books on, anyway, because the rack space is reserved for the high-volume turnover "item".

The entrepreneurs may justify themselves, for example, through ideas such as those of Richard Snyder, of Simon and Schuster, who states that the company's books are successful through the chain stores because they

... serve a different community of book readers from any that the book business has ever had before - book readers with different tastes. The elitism of the book market doesn't exist any more... There has been an elitism here about reading books. Up to now, only a certain class read books, and the book-distribution mechanism was for that class. Now, all of a sudden - boom! You are feeding books to people who formerly read nothing... If people read a terrible book, at least

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**Thames and Hudson 1981**



there's a book in the house... I say it's good - better that people read a commercial book than read nothing. It's a step up.

Mr Snyder may have a point; but, while there is much evidence for how successfully a terrible book may come to be sold, there is no indication of what will be available in the chain store of the shopping mall for the suburbanite who "formerly read nothing" when, by some advantage of "a step up", she wants to read a worthwhile book.

Mr Whiteside tells this whole grim story with admirable journalistic accuracy. As a writer, editor, and publisher, I have been involved with and affected by much of the story he tells. I was on the staff of Alfred A. Knopf in 1960, when it was bought by Random House, and in 1980 I was on the Board of Directors of the American Book Awards when it was much maligned. I fully believe that none of Whiteside's facts nor any of his interpretation is wrong. He has described the radical change in American publishing correctly and dispassionately - except for a few "editorial" remarks. Referring to the unexpected power exercised by authors' agents in the new situation, he goes so far as to consider them: "A rather slender reed against which to lean the integrity of contemporary American literature". His concluding criticism is offered without elaboration, namely that "the mass merchandising, the hype, the frenzied pursuit of Number One which the book-publishing industry has turned to as a central and universal tool is in its very essence anti-art, and even anti-thought".

The implications of this report must be faced, for there is a real and present danger. We can leave out of consideration much publishing that continues to be carried out reasonably well in the United States. The *Blockbuster Complex* does not deal with technical or professional journals, text-books or scholarly books. Although it purports to deal with commercial books in general, the focus and the force of the study comes to centre almost exclusively on fiction, and for good reason. It is

less easy to "hype" up a work of non-fiction, nor is the potential "all-or-nothing" gamble on a work of history, biography, or political criticism likely to bring the same financial windfall as the software "product" for the communications-entertainment network.

What is at risk here is the future range of fiction, of imaginative literature, that quality of literary culture which, through lapses and renewals, has been enriched since the beginnings of the humanist tradition founded in the Italian and the English Renaissance. The cultivation of a critical cast of mind has flowered in works of literature both abstractly speculative and concretely imaginative. The latter, whether expressed in essays, poems, plays, short stories or novels, have contributed to the formation of the values of the increasingly larger class of general readers as well as the intelligentsia. It is a verbal tradition through which thought and feeling are communicated and shared; to be engaged by material of one's own limited emotions and ideas to be both extended and refined by encounters with the sensibility and intelligence of others. To read such books is to accept the invitation to think with someone else's mind; it is a unique way to benefit from the experience of others: living or dead.

Within this tradition, there has always been a wide range of choices among works of the imagination to please individual tastes: from high-culture seriousness and charm, through a middle range of adventure, mystery, rapportage, and humour, to the low level of day-dreaming or other forms of fantasy, whether in the direction of Erica Jong, the Marquis de Sade, Horatio Alger, or Mary Baker Eddy. In this regard, to read imaginative writing is always escapism. To escape from one's own moral or intellectual limitations - to escape into something better, or something worse and, thereby, be refined into something superior, confirmed in one's own familiar formation, or debased into something less admirable. With respect to this range, the elite have always been

self-selected; but the objective possibility of choice depends upon what is available.

During this century, the Man of Letters has disappeared - the writer who might just as easily produce a novel as a play, a volume of poems, criticism or belle-lettristic essays. He is as much a victim of The Age of Specialization as the audience is a victim of the new tradition of the visual as against the verbal. We now have two generations of Americans raised first on motion pictures and then on television, so that Mr Snyder's description of the woman in the shopping mall "who formerly read nothing" is entirely credible. The danger is that, if commercial publishing remains primarily in the grip of "the blockbuster complex", it is only the kind of novels she can be persuaded to buy that will be brought out. Neither our educators nor our literary critics seem to have any power to oppose this trend. Our educational system demonstrates no ability to inculcate a love of reading and the habit of book-buying strong enough to counter the passive superficiality of the "communications-entertainment" industry. The reviewers and critics of the East Coast literary establishment spend more energy debunking the competitors for blockbuster status than in employing their talents to show potential readers what is good in the books they respect. The entertainment complex has usurped and preempted their role.

The ultimate success story with which Whiteside concludes his book is how the paperback rights for the second novel by Judith Krantz, *Princess Daisy*, in the excitement of fourteen-and-a-half hours of auctioning, came to be acquired by Bantam Books for an advance of \$3,208,875. The fortunate Mrs Krantz is quoted as saying: "I'm not trying to be taken seriously by the East Coast literary establishment. But I'm taken very seriously by the bankers". For the auction of reprint rights to *Princess Daisy* to become front-page news is to say that - between Hollywood agents and producers, hard-cover and paperback publishers - the presumed value of a book is deter-

mined in advance of publication (and sometimes in advance of its being written) by its imagined sales potential alone. Financial value in the marketplace is a self-fulfilling prophecy - which shows that the cart can be put before the horse. In the few instances where the gamble does not pay off, the corporate owners have only to fire the managers and replace them with more daring entrepreneurs. And they do so.

It is a case of Gresham's Law once again: "Bad money drives good money out of circulation". When, in order to keep more of the Treasury for himself, Henry VIII debased the English pound (causing a general rise in prices and a fall of the exchange rate) the heavier, more valuable coins were either hoarded or exported. As American literature is debased for the sole purpose of increasing profit to the "property" owners, more talented writers will go into other fields or keep their writing to themselves. One cannot appeal to the responsibility of such owners to maintain the mainstream of high seriousness as well as increasing their profit, because they have not read the right books to have such values confirmed in their moral formation.

I say "as well as" because I have no objection to publishers and authors making a lot of money. What I object to is a situation in which, in order for a few of them to make enormous amounts of money, the majority of authors must make less and less. I do not begrudge Judith Krantz her millions; what I resent is that my novels are out of print, as are the novels and short stories and essays of many contemporary authors whom I admire. These reflections are being written in a cottage in northern Michigan during a summer holiday. There is no book store in the town. There is no book store on the one main street has, for all the years my family has come here, offered a large selection of paperback reprints. It was one of the pleasures of haphazard summer reading to discover in that shop books by interesting, thoughtful, original, engaging authors. This year not one book by any

such author is available. The three long sections of racks for paperback books have been reduced to one - which contains only books with titles like *Raging Passions* or *Smoking Guns* and *Countess Valiant*; westerns, gothics, romances - and bestsellers. Everything Whiteside says in *The Blockbuster Complex* is true. The economics of commercial publishing have overwhelmed the sociology of literary taste. My opportunities are reduced to thinking with the mind of either a Louis l'Amour or a Barbara Cartland. Some choice.

The author offers a few slight hopes for the future. "... there are editors who, stepping aside from regular staff employment at a publishing house, elect to make special profit-sharing arrangements with that publisher or another - arrangements in which the publisher puts out under the editor's imprint books that the editor has acquired. In a way, the juggernaut advance of big-book publishing may have given special impetus to the more ingenious and spirited of those editors, since comparatively few manuscripts and authors are considered to be in the big-book league; and some of the better university presses have similarly benefitted from the availability of manuscripts of merit that the big conglomerate-owned houses are not interested in touching".

Mr Whiteside's book is published by the Wesleyan University Press and distributed by the Columbia University Press. Thus does he exemplify his own generalization.

The biography of the legendary American publisher's editor, Mr Perkins, which was first published in 1978 and reviewed in the TLS on July 28 of that year, has recently been reissued as a paperback by Macdonald Futura (640pp, £2.95, 0 7088 1778 5). The book which traces Perkins' long career as an editor for Scribner's and is rich in anecdotes, about his working methods, reflects the vigour of American publishing in the 1920s and 1930s. The core of the book is its account of Perkins' relationships with Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe.

## BIOGRAPHY

MARGARET LAVINIA ANDERSON:  
*Windthorst*  
A Political Biography  
522pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press. £25.  
0 19 822578 4

The role of the Catholics in German social and political life over the past two hundred years has been a difficult one for historians to assess. The Catholics do not fit into the categories in which historians, especially over the past twenty years, have been accustomed to study German history. While they were in many areas economically backward and accordingly can be regarded as part of the section of German society which was retarding modernization, they were also, because of the necessity of preserving their identity under the harsh oppression of the *Kulturkampf*, the most group other than the Social Democrats to form an effective party political organization in the Bismarckian empire, and so pointed forward to modern types of political activity.

In the 1870s and 1880s at least, they were, because of their experience of persecution, committed to the protection of civil rights as well as being opposed to centralization. That they became after Bismarck's fall increasingly a party of government, so that both before 1918 and in the Weimar Republic they were an indispensable component of any majority in parliament, is a fact of German political history that still needs much explanation. David Blackburn in his *Class, Religion and Local Politics in Germany* made a major contribution to the discussion of the problem for the period 1890 to 1914; and now Margaret Lavinia Anderson has, in her political biography of Ludwig Windthorst, provided a scholarly and original study of Catholic politics in Germany between 1866 and Windthorst's death in 1891.

Windthorst was a remarkable figure in many ways. His physical appearance was odd enough: only five feet tall, nearly blind, very ugly and with a rasping voice, he did not seem to have the physical presence to be the outstanding orator and parliamentary figure he was to become. Starting as a small-town lawyer in Osnabrück, he twice became Minister of Justice for the Kingdom of Hanover, in 1851 and again in 1862, so that by the time of the annexation of Hanover by Prussia in 1866 and the exile of whose family (to the interests of whose family Windthorst remained devoted to the end of his life) he was already an experienced politician of fifty-four. It must be admitted that the early part of this biography is rather dull: few people will find a detailed account of Hanoverian politics in the 1850s en-thralling and Professor Anderson's rather clumsy style does not make for easy reading. (A sentence such as "Inopportunities was undoubtedly not the only reason for Windthorst's strenuous efforts to prevent the dogmatization of papal infallibility" is not an unfair example). But as soon as Windthorst becomes a national politician, involved in the drama of the *Kulturkampf* and the Vatican's relations with Germany, the story becomes a fascinating one, the interest of which goes far beyond Windthorst's own career.

At the time of his seventy-ninth birthday in 1891, two months before his death, the Reichstag paid Windthorst the unusual tribute of a formal expression of their congratulations. It was an honour more justified than some of those who supported it perhaps realized, for more than any other politician of the Bismarckian period, Windthorst had shown how Bismarck and provide a serious focus of resistance to the government's policies. As Anderson puts it in her

conclusion, "In the 1880s the legislature was still the voice of the people, the focus of the national drama, the scene of Germany's great expectations. By guarding and defending constitutional liberties and by insisting that legislation be constructed universally and applied fairly, Windthorst offered his countrymen a new understanding of law." The tragedy is that that understanding, even within his own party, did not outlast his death.

Windthorst's development from a rather conservative provincial politician to a national statesman who, as Anderson says, "like Gladstone... moved farther to the Left the older he became, and like Gladstone... was motivated by advancing conviction in about equal measure" was almost entirely the work of Bismarck. In a famous remark Bismarck said in 1875, "Hatred is just as great an incentive in life as love. My life is sustained and made pleasant by two things: my wife and Windthorst. One exists for love, the other for hate." Windthorst's reputation as David to Bismarck's Goliath grew first out of his anger at Prussian treatment of his native Hanover and then out of Bismarck's decision to persecute the Catholic Church. Until then, Windthorst's political beliefs had been a mixture of mild conservatism and mild liberalism, of Burke and J. S. Mill, two authors whom he admired, and his attitude to politics that of a rather dull provincial lawyer who was not particularly involved in the activities of the local Catholic community. The *Kulturkampf* transformed him as a political figure and turned the *Zentrum* from a small Prussian group of sectarian politicians into a national party. Anderson's analysis of the origins of Bismarck's decision to attempt to limit the influence of the Catholic Church does not go very deep (for a subtler account one must turn, for instance,

to Lothar Gall's recent biography of Bismarck), but her analysis of its effects is most illuminating. It is easy to overlook the extent of the persecution of the Catholics which the enforcement of the laws introduced at Bismarck's instigation caused, especially in Prussia, just as it is important to remember the degree of resistance shown by Catholics. "No Prussian bishop fulfilled his obligation to register clerical appointments with the governor for approval. As a result, celebrants were arrested during illegal masses; in Ohlau the host was snatched from the tabernacle to be used in court as evidence". When the property of the octogenarian Bishop of Münster was seized at auction and carried off to the bishop's residence in triumph. In 1874 a troop of hussars and half a company of infantry were needed in Trier to disperse an angry crowd of over a thousand who were protecting their seminary professors against expulsion by the police. The consequences of the anti-Catholic laws were the opposite to what Bismarck had expected or intended: the Catholics became consciously alienated from the new Reich rather than meekly incorporated into it. They refused to take part in national celebrations; they dissociated themselves from expressions of sympathy for the Emperor after the attempt on his life in 1878. The result was that there were some 36 per cent of the population of Germany whose loyalty to the state had to be regained over the next twenty years.

Politically the effect was to transform the *Zentrum* into a powerful political grouping which became the natural ally of other minority groups - Poles, Guelts, Danes, Alsations. The effects on Windthorst's career were equally great. He became a famous national, and indeed international political figure, but he was

also a man of sufficient principle to see that the oppression of one minority was linked to the oppression of others. Consequently, to the alarm of many Catholics and of the Vatican itself, he became an opponent of the anti-socialist law of 1878 which inflicted on the Social Democrats restrictions comparable to those suffered by the Catholics, and even more surprisingly considering the prejudices of many of his own supporters, he was an equally strong opponent of the anti-Semitism which was spreading in Germany in the 1880s. Accordingly, he was at times prepared to work with the left-wing liberals and even with the Social Democrats. Nevertheless, the sectarian basis of the Centre Party prevented it from becoming a permanent partner of the parties of the Left, and even if it had done so, the Bismarckian constitution effectively ruled out any chance that such a coalition might form an alternative government. By the 1880s Bismarck was, for a number of reasons, quietly allowing the anti-Catholic legislation of the previous decade to lapse; one reason was the strength and influence of the Centre Party, although he never agreed to the wholesale repeal of the legislation as Windthorst consistently demanded.

If the Church was no longer in need of defence, what was the role of the Centre Party to be? As long as Windthorst was alive he was able to keep the party together as an effective opposition to Bismarck. "After Windthorst's death", Professor Anderson writes, "the 'disidence of dissent' lost its legitimacy, and political Catholicism began to gravitate back to its former, more conservative position on the political spectrum". The Centre Party of the 1890s, though keeping its role as a focus of Catholic opinion and of Catholic political activity, became, like so many other organizations in

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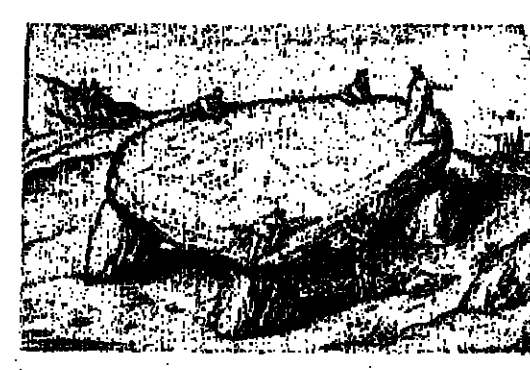
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Wilhelmine Germany, a means of balancing conflicting economic interests; but Windthorst's successors also saw themselves as reintegrating the Catholic community into German national life. From being a party of opposition they became a party of government.

Windthorst's own career had overshadowed two important developments in his party. He was himself archetypically a member of the middle classes: his modest provincial origins and his personal frugality separated him from the Catholic *grands seigneurs*. His "entire appearance," as one observer recalled, "was petty bourgeois." And although his emergence as a party leader was helped by his alliance with some of the Catholic aristocracy, notably Hermann von Mallinckrodt, his remarkable success as a political orator and parliamentarian showed the next generation of Centre Party leaders that bourgeois origins could be a positive advantage. The other way in which Windthorst pointed in the direction which the Centre Party – and indeed its successor in our own day, the CDU – was to take was in his relations with the Vatican. After the death of Pius IX in 1878, the new Pope Leo XIII was for a number of reasons anxious for a reconciliation with the German state, and Windthorst was asked by the Vatican on several occasions to support the government – over the Anti-Socialist Law or the army budgets of 1880 and 1887, for

example. In each case Windthorst refused, arguing that while he regarded it as his duty to resist any threats to the freedom of the Church, other issues were purely political; and on these the party leadership must be free to decide without interference from the Vatican. One of the best things in Professor Anderson's book is her account of Leo XIII's efforts to get the Centre Party to support Bismarck's army bill in 1887 and of the complex and devious intrigues at the Vatican and within the German ecclesiastical hierarchy ending in Windthorst's last great tactical triumph.

The desire to keep the Centre Party free of control from the Vatican and to keep open as many alternative courses of political action as possible, without reference to any overriding principle or authority, had its dangers, which were to become apparent under Windthorst's successors. Even in Windthorst's time, the party had sometimes been accused of opportunism, of keeping its options open so as to win concessions in return for its votes in parliament. A leading liberal, Eduard Lasker, had put it as follows: "This facile mobility is its strength, and basically one cannot censure it so very much when it places one point which it considers an ethical one far in the foreground and says: next to this profane issue are for us completely indifferent and are to be used as small change to make up the difference in trade." As

the disabilities imposed by the *Kulturkampf* were gradually removed, so the ethical points which the Centre Party placed in the foreground became increasingly fewer and the small change for trading all the greater. The Centre Party's parliamentary freedom of manoeuvre grew, and with it the temptation to exercise power without responsibility.

Professor Anderson has written a very valuable biography, and although she is not setting out to take sides in the current controversies among historians of Wilhelmine Germany, her conclusions will give considerable support to those British historians such as Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn who are challenging the view predominant in Germany that the politics of the Wilhelmine era are to be explained solely in terms of manipulation from above and of the imposition of the values of the old feudal elite on the new industrial society. She tells one a great deal about the political structure and functioning of Bismarck's Germany and the various options for German political development which were still open even in the 1880s. One reads the opening chapters of this book with a feeling that it is going to be a dull book about a dull man, but one ends with an increased knowledge and understanding of important and neglected aspects of Bismarckian Germany as well as of a remarkable individual.

## Dirty tricks department

By S. S. Prawer

WILHELM J. C. E. STIEBER:  
The Chancellor's Spy  
The Revelations of the Chief of  
Bismarck's Secret Service  
Translated by Jan van Heurck  
224pp. Columbus. £10.95.  
0 394 50869 6

"What is particularly interesting is the inability of this exemplary Prussian to tell the truth. He can't help interpolating lies – even wholly pointless lies – among the facts, true or false, taken from documents amassed in evidence. On the word of such professional liars – and they are more numerous today than they have ever been – hundreds of people are thrown into prison; and that's what they nowadays call 'rescuing the state'." Readers of Marx and Engels, the standard East German edition of the works of Marx and Engels, will remember Marx's painstaking analysis of the evidence given by Wilhelm Stieber at the Cologne "Communist Trial" and the massive proofs he adduces in support of the statement I have just quoted. The book now under review purports to give Stieber's side of the story. It presents itself as Stieber's memoirs, telling the story of his rise and fall and rise again in the secret service of King William IV of Prussia and Otto von Bismarck. We read about the role he played in extracting incriminating papers from communists in London and Paris; his organization of a secret service which enabled the Prussian kings to control their own people, to escape assassination attempts, and to set up fifth columns in Austria and France; his large-scale forgery of foreign banknotes with which Prussia's spies were paid in potentially hostile countries (shades of *Private Schulz*); his dealings with high-class brothel-keepers and confidence-tricksters; his wielding of power over life and death in the field during the Franco-Prussian War. But how much trust can we put in these sometimes amusing, sometimes horrifying tales?

The doubts raised in my mind are of several kinds. There is the question, first, of the authenticity of these memoirs. A Publisher's Note tells us that "the single copy of the original memoirs, made by [Stieber] in 1878, was offered for publication in 1978. When won the original memoirs written there? Were they changed, introduced by the compiler, and if so, what kind? Who has ever seen the original? If the manu-

script on which the book is based was not in Wilhelm Stieber's own handwriting, what guarantees have we that they fully represent what he wrote? The publisher's note goes on to tell us, with characteristic vagueness, that the contents of these memoirs were examined in light of "historical literature" and that "the material published in Germany in 1984, which represents a statistical synopsis of Stieber's years of service, was consulted to ensure the accuracy of the facts." Who did the examining? Who compiled the "statistical synopsis" (whatever that is)? Why, if the "accuracy of the facts" has indeed been checked by a competent and reliable historian, is our attention not drawn to obvious errors – like calling Freddy Demuth "Henry", for instance? Why not confront the (admittedly very amusing) version here given of how Stieber tricked the London communists into handing over confidential documents with the very different account that emerged from Stieber's well-documented evidence at the Cologne Communist Trial? But then, the publishers seem to take their editorial responsibilities very lightly. The "Index of Persons" they provide is utterly useless because it simply repeats the information given in the text: if the text speaks of "Dietz", "Dietz" will appear in the index, with no hint of first names, vital dates, or clues to the vicissitudes that made him a "former apothecary" when the MEW tells us that he was an architect from Wiesbaden. In the same way "Dr Wolff" in the text becomes "Wolff, Dr" in the index, "von Kameke" reappears as "Kameke, von". The principle adopted seems to be that of Inspector Clouseau, whose files when consulted about the identity of a sinister figure known only as The Fat Man, yields the helpful entry: "THE FAT MAN. Male, fat."

Even if a respectable historian should come forward to authenticate these memoirs for us, we would still have to treat everything they contain with extreme caution. What was the family of wealthy English landowners who so proudly traced their ancestry back to the British national hero, Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) from whom Stieber in turn traced his descent? The writer gives no name, and the publishers, as usual, have not seen fit to help us. Did Stieber really save his future wife from highwaymen in the fashion approved by hundreds of German novels?

In the dim light the marauders may have believed that a number of jewels were approaching, or the story may have been tightened by the author from his father's

hunting rifle. In any case, they all fled as fast as they could, never to return, whereupon my father politely sprang from his saddle to ask the frightened family how they were. They, in turn, thanked him profusely, regarding him as a saviour sent by God.

The eldest daughter, my future mother, was just recovering from the fainting spell that she had suffered when the highwaymen appeared. The first thing she saw was my father standing before her, the saviour who had rescued her from the most extreme peril, the very image of masculine strength. In that moment, she fell passionately in love with him.

Did Stieber really, as a theology student, preach a memorable rousing sermon before a congregation that included King Frederick William IV? Did the wealthy lady of Rheims whose house was spared in the midst of much pillaging and killing by the Prussian invaders really toast these invaders with the "sensitive speech" (!) here ascribed to her?

You victors have, to be sure, taken weapons from the men of France, but not from us women! We shall continue to employ against you the woman's weapon of charm and irresistible kindness, until you have changed from the victors to the vanquished!

Can we trust a text that sounds like a third-rate novel in such passages as these when it purports to tell us what transpired in heart-to-heart talks between Stieber and Bismarck? I for one would want a great deal of independent corroboration before I took the word of whoever wrote these memoirs for anything that cannot already be learnt from the "history-books."

In *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*, edited and translated by Donald Ward, Professor of German and Folklore at the University of California, Los Angeles (21, 0 86000 161 x), Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsche Sagen*, originally published in 1816-18 and re-edited in 1865 and 1891 by Jacob's son Hermann, are made available for the first time in English. The editor has included the Grimms' own prefaces, sources and addenda, and commentary on each of the 585 legends, together with his own bibliography of sources and epilogue on the Brothers Grimm, their precursors and influences. The work is a new series, "Translations in Folklore Studies," edited by Dan Ben-Amos, Professor of Folklore and Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania.



The Empress Eugénie, consort of Napoleon III, in old age. Much of her long life was spent in exile in England; she is buried at Farnborough, Hampshire, beside her husband and son, both of whom she survived for more than forty years. The photograph above, taken in 1914, forms one of the numerous illustrations in *The Last Courts of Europe* (256pp. Dent, £12.95, 0 460 04519 9) by Jeffrey Finestone. (See also cover illustration.)

## Rule of three

By Oswyn Murray

HENRI-PIERRE ROCHÉ:  
Jules and Jim  
Translated by Patrick Evans  
239pp. Marion Boyars. £6.95.  
0 7145 2749 1

Ignorance is a constant source of pleasure: discovering now the book behind *Jules et Jim* is like actually reading Henry Murger's twenty-year apprenticeship with Puccini. Indeed it is not only the relationship between minor work and its transformation into a masterpiece in a different art form which is illuminated by this comparison; for in all important respects except his long-lived Henri-Pierre Roché seems to repeat the experience of the first Bohemian two generations earlier.

Like Murger, Roché was a fringe member of the artistic world of Montmartre, a friend of Duchamp, Brancusi, Braque, Satie and Picasso; like *Scènes de la vie, Jules et Jim* is an autobiographical novel. In both works an apparently light-hearted fantasy has revealed, through being transposed into a different medium, its latent didacticism. And the message is essentially the same.

We are in Paris during *La belle époque*, at the *Bal des Quinze Arts* a friendship is born between two men. The self-indulgence typical of 1816-18 and re-edited in 1865 and 1891 by Jacob's son Hermann, are made available for the first time in English. The editor has included the Grimms' own prefaces, sources and addenda, and commentary on each of the 585 legends, together with his own bibliography of sources and epilogue on the Brothers Grimm, their precursors and influences. The work is a new series, "Translations in Folklore Studies," edited by Dan Ben-Amos, Professor of Folklore and Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania.

The gratuitousness of the final tragedy serves only to heighten the meaning of the series of almost equally gratuitous sexual humiliations with which Kate has enslaved her lovers over the years.

Truffaut takes much besides the detailed plot from Roché, most notably perhaps the cool third person narrative technique, and the naïveté which gives an unrelenting freshness to every act: indeed it is clear how congenial Truffaut has found Roché's tone from the fact that *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent* is also based on a book by him. It is a consequence of this one-dimensional presentation that over twenty years the characters do not change; they merely experience events. At the end they are the same charmingly casual students that they had been in 1907 – which is only to repeat that the final tragedy is not explained.

If we return to Murger, we can perhaps see the reason for the power of *Jules et Jim*, as book or film. The latent didactic element that Puccini brought out was the morality inherent in Bohemianism, and more especially the existence of grand passion and true love, without fraudulence and amid ordinary poverty: it was the artistic recognition of an alternative morality of love. A century later the same theme is illuminated against the same backdrop. The generation of *Jules et Jim* was well used to the idea of student love in gaiety and rage; but Truffaut knew that his story was potentially shocking, because it portrayed love and friendship as equal, and the goal (whether it is reached or not) perhaps the ambiguity in Kate's fate (not of possessiveness) as being passion again at the beginning, said Kate, and rediscovered the rules, taking risks and paying on the nail." This was a deliberate assault on current moral attitudes, and a successful one: it is strange that Henri-Pierre Roché in the novel is apparently so concerned with his story that he does not seem to recognize its moral dimension. But without Roché's artlessness and light-heartedness, perhaps Truffaut would never have found his voice.

## Slapstick and body-slashing

By D. M. Thomas

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH:  
Pretender to the Throne  
The Further Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin  
Translated by Richard Lourie  
357pp. Jonathan Cape. £7.95.  
0 224 01966 X

Soviet dissident authors are no more immune than anyone else to the temptation to try to repeat an earlier success, and Vladimir Voinovich is no exception. Rarely are second parts as successful as the first; and I do not think these "Further Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin" match the comic vitality of *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*, though they are always entertaining and at times brilliant.

Voinovich's reluctance to let Private Chonkin go is understandable. Ivan is a young and simple peasant, related to the archetypal "Ivan the Fool" of Russian folklore – whose naïveté, muddle-headedness, and common good nature are constantly getting him both into and out of trouble at the hands of corrupt officials. He is from the village of Chonkino, where practically everyone is named Chonkin, many are called Ivan, and not a few share the hero's patronymic too – Vasilyevich.

The author, who was himself a manual worker, and who later got into deep trouble with the Soviet authorities because of the straightforward honesty of his stories, is obviously very much at home with Chonkin. The character is Russian but also universal; one can imagine him portrayed on film by Norman Wisdom in a relatively serious mood.

In the first book, Chonkin had been sent by his unit to guard a plane that had come down in the middle of nowhere. The army had forgotten him, and the plane's existence, and he had dozed off, guarding it, consoled by the wet body of a postmistress, Nyura, who lived in a nearby house. At the end of the novel, however, he is arrested as a traitor. In the new book, published since Voinovich's move to the West, we see Ivan languishing in prison (while Nyura vainly struggles to procure his freedom), convicted of being a White Guard agent attempting to restore the monarchy, and sentenced to death. The absurd accusation arises from the fact that an investigator, visiting Chonkino, hears a rumour that an "Ivan Chonkin" was the bastard son of Prince Golitsyn. Ivan becomes "the so-called Chonkin". White Chonkin, Chonkin-Golitsyn, and finally... Golitsyn-Chonkin. Beria himself puts the finishing touch, by crossing out the superfluous "Chonkin", before forwarding the Golitsyn case to Stalin.

Both Hitler and Stalin become involved in the Golitsyn affair. The Führer orders Guderian to switch his tank attack from Moscow to the small town where Ivan is awaiting execution; hence the miraculous escape of Moscow. In the Soviet High Command, confusion is so rife that the local garrison commander receives simultaneously, from the same official, an order to shoot Golitsyn at once and to send Chonkin to Moscow to receive an award. The wilder Voinovich's imagination becomes, the funnier he is, and the better he writes. He follows Gogol in these passages, and is worthy of the master. There is a wonderful surreal portrait of a newspaper editor, Ermolkin, so dedicated to his office that "one would think that a Linotype machine had given birth to him". One night he makes the extraordinary decision to visit his wife and child:

Boris Evgenovich turned to his wife. "And where is our... He chewed his lips, trying to remember his son's name. "And where is that little boy of ours?"

His wife wiped away her tears on the collar of her dress, looked over at Boris Evgenovich with a long, questioning glance, then suddenly, having come to some realisation, said: "And just how old do you think our little boy is?" "Three and a half," said Ermolkin, but then was immediately seized by doubt. "Isn't that right?"

## In an alien light

By Galen Strawson

ADAM MARS-JONES:  
Lantern Lecture  
198pp. Faber. £6.95.  
0 571 11813 5

Adam Mars-Jones's subjects – the objects of his fictions – are real people and events. The first of his three stories, "Lantern Lecture", concerns a notable eccentric, Philip Yorke of Erdgill Hall; the second, "Hoosh-mi", concerns the royal family, and carries the following hermetically sealed disclaimer on its title page: "The events and characters of this disclaimer are without exception fictitious; any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental." The third story, "Batpool Park", recounts the life and crimes of Donald Neilson, the "Black Panther", kidnapper of Lesley Whitte.

Starting from publicly available facts, Mars-Jones moves away from them in a variety of different ways. "Lantern Lecture", for example, subjects the life of Philip Yorke to chronological cut-up. Everything is levelled into the present tense and redistributed, a controlled jumble of lantern-slides. The life is already superbly odd; the art in Mars-Jones's treatment of it lies partly in the new juxtapositions and sequences that his chronological reorganization yields.

But it lies also in the delicate and unerring unconventional manner in which he apprehends the actions and convictions of this Christian man, who in a succession of dying cars... potters through the countryside on errands so small that no-one else would hear their call; and in the meticulous, curiously merciless and often beautiful phrasing. There are incidents that one is inclined to call charming; but at the same time it seems inappropriate. This eccentricity has nothing remotely cosy about it as Mars-Jones presents it. Yorke is transfigured, becoming abstract in his absence, and, in his innocence, slightly sinister.

"Hoosh-mi" is a nonsense word coined by Princess Margaret as a child, and means (as a noun) *mixed food* of any sort, or, by extension (like the similar words *mish-mash*, *mess*, *farrago*, *bodge-podge*), "disorderly jumble". As a verb it means

to mix up." Mars-Jones's "Hoosh-mi" is a tightly controlled hoosh-mi of truths and untruths. The royal family – horses, homeopathy and all – is warped on the loom of imagination, and the web of fiction is threaded in. A rabid bat flies the Atlantic. It bites a corgi (a corgi called Evesham Pontius Meggezone III). The corgi, fatally, licks his mistress's face; his mistress is the queen. The rabies works within her slowly, and we follow the stages of physical degeneration – Mars-Jones is an expert symptomatologist. It becomes critical only on an Australian tour, and by then it's far too late to save her.

A panoply of detail provides the basis for this "defamiliarization" of the royal family. Mars-Jones seems to combine apparently limitless historical erudition with great selective acumen; interstitially he develops some more serious and subtle reflections on the characters of his royal subjects – he is especially intrigued by Prince Philip – and on the condition of modern monarchy, the condition of being a public object. He does this partly in the person of Dr Bull, who delivers, intermittently, a talk on "Royalty and the Unreal".

The language throughout is that of the learned journal, and Mars-Jones's inventiveness gains by the pedagogical sobriety of his medium. Having commented on the queen's respect for precedent and orthodoxy, having noted the inefficiency of "ritualized and successful potencies of *arsenicum album*, *atropa belladonna*, and *allium cepa*" against the rabies virus, he observes that "it is at first blush surprising that the Queen should favour even so established a heterodoxy as homeopathy. But the story of her ancestry is also the story of the monarch's transition from owning his country to being its mascot; so what could be more likely to attract the second Elizabeth, than a doctrine which insists that a substance gains overwhelmingly in strength by being crushed and watered down?" A mosaic of happenstance around a raving queen: there is acuity in this measured folly, and, in the acuity, a curious kind of affection.

"Batpool Park" is the longest of the three stories, and a *tour de force*. Most of it consists in the sharp, short-paragraphed reportage of Neilson's crimes, and his trial in Oxford Crown Court; but integral to this are Mars-Jones's own plausible specula-

tions on Neilson's character, on his motives, anxieties, and psychological tropisms. And the account of the trial is embedded in a structural analysis of the court room, both as a place – the public gallery, the press gallery, the dock – and as a complex synergy of concepts, offices, and roles; reasonable doubt, *mens rea*, the clerk of the court, the marshal, the advocates, the jury, the judge (in this case Mr Justice Mars-Jones). Especially impressive is the thirteen-page post-trial exchange that Mars-Jones puts into the mouths of the two advocates, prosecution and defence:

MR GRAY: A bargain was struck by the forces of law and order – MR COX: without their even knowing it. Established structures acted to spare themselves. MR GRAY: – and passed up the chance to investigate their own flaws. MR COX: In this respect the legal system acted as a nervous system rather than a brain. MR GRAY: Its unsuspected priority was to continue functioning, not to establish truths – MR COX: – at the risk of its own safety, by exploring its own procedural underpinnings.

There is something punk, in the modern sense of the word, about this extremely clever and original collection of stories. It's to do with the emotionally deadened style of delivery, the technical impassivity of the allusive *cloisonné* construction. A sense is imparted of great coldness in the observing and gathering eye. There is something Martian, too, about the conceptual gawgaws, the nice ambivalences, the acidulated precision of description. But the stories are not Martian in the simplest sense in which Craig Raine's poetry is called Martian; Mars-Jones's making-strange is of an essentially more discursive, non-metaphorical character. The stories are Martian, rather, in the sense they give of detachment, of a point of view which, for all the cold insight it affords into people and things, is none the less somehow disconnected with humanity. They diffuse a faintly alien light.

The Cheltenham Festival of Literature will be held this year from 11 to 18 October. Programmes and tickets are available from the Festival Office, Town Hall, Imperial Square, Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 1QA.

## F.O. affairs

By Andrew Motion

PIERS PAUL READ:  
The Villa Golitsyn  
193pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.  
0 435 40968 2

"If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." Piers Paul Read's new novel explores the implications of Forster's celebrated remark in a narrative of engrossing complexity. It begins with an account of an incident in the undeclared war between Indonesia and Malaya during the 1960s, in which an English officer was tortured and killed by guerrillas. Leslie Baldwin and Willy Ludley, two members of the embassy staff, were suspected of having betrayed him – and when Ludley fled he was assumed to be guilty. Twenty years later he is living with his wife Priss ("although I'm not a prissy person" in the south of France, and Baldwin is due for promotion. But because Baldwin's innocence was never absolutely proved, the Foreign Office decide to re-open their investigations. They send Simon Milson, an old school friend of Ludley's, to discover the whole truth.

The Villa Golitsyn is Ludley's house in Nice, where the bulk of the story is set. In summary, the plot sounds like a Famous Five adventure peopled by drunks and sexual frustrates: Ludley is a soak, Priss will only tease Milson, and the other two guests (a runaway schoolgirl, Helen, and another school friend of Ludley's, Charlie) forlornly hero-worship their sozzled host. But Piers Paul Read tries to dignify the extravagant elements in his novel by drawing a number of parallels between its various worlds. As Milson tries to understand the secret of Ludley's past, issues raised by remote historical events are reflected in contemporary personal crises. The original question – how could Ludley behave so uncharacteristically as to betray a friend? – is mirrored in Milson's own worry about the rights and wrongs of seducing Priss, and in his wondering how youthful radicalism and energy can decline into middle-aged, boozy disillusionment. It is, in other words, the question of transformation that bothers him:

How then had it happened, Simon asked himself, that someone who had inspired such trust – whom once he would have followed into Hell itself – had changed from a hero into a drunk? The only one of his generation to have believed that a man must shape his destiny by the exercise of his will, he was now like the gnarled root of a great tree carried down by the river Var, left stranded on the story beach of the Baie des Anges.

For Milson to be so surprised by the dramatic change in Ludley indicates that he will not credit people

the crimes and follies of Soviet man, and the cancer so all-pervasive that the satirist tires of exposing it to useless radiation. He is happier when, like a mad Gogolian surgeon, he slashes at the body.

Perhaps significantly, there are several passages in which he briefly deserts the satirical mode for one which, if comic at all, is comedy at its blackest: a conscience-stricken official tries to shoot himself, but only succeeds, by accident, at the moment when he changes his mind and decides to live; Chonkin glances up on his cell wall sees, dumbfounded, that "a certain Kuzakov or Puzakov, not desiring to vanish without a trace, had scribbled his name in shit, which had petrified in time." At this instant, and in a few others, there is neither Gogolian extravagance nor Swiftian *saeva indignatio*: we are in the Inferno of Dante or Solzhenitsyn.

Ludley is much less forthcoming about his former public life than he is about his private one. He decides not to reveal anything until Helen has been removed from his sight. Before Milson can arrange this, however, fate intervenes: Ludley, Priss and Charlie are drowned in a storm, and Simon – showing exactly the same unpredictability he had puzzled over in others – falls for Helen. "He stimulated his flagging appetite by varying the ways in which he made love to her, and went on to enact pantomimes of his own invention. He called her his 'pet', tied a poodle's collar around her neck, and let her walk in all four corners of the Villa bedchamber. As soon as they leave for England, he regrets it. Helen turns out to be not only a bore, but also under-age. And when Milson attends Ludley's and Priss's funeral, personal considerations are once again shown to have a public dimension. Leslie Baldwin appears after the service and reveals himself as a traitor who was working for the Communists in Jakarta during the 1960s, just as he has been, elsewhere, ever since. True to form, he tries to buy Milson's silence by showing him compromising photographs which have been taken during the lustful and illegal interlude with Helen.

This blackmail provokes a final résumé of the novel's theme. When Milson goes to the Foreign Office and tells all – expecting imprisonment and disgrace – his bosses simply decide to carry on with Baldwin as if they had discovered nothing: "a spy can be useful if he doesn't know we know." Private morality, Piers Paul Read implies, is always subject to the brusque morality of the state. It is a conclusion which is made most resonant in *The Villa Golitsyn* when he uses a matter-of-fact style, and allows the oddities and ironies of his historical context to speak for themselves. But within the novel's plausibly factual framework is a more obviously "imaginative" fiction – and here, for all the plain language and cunning interweaving of past and present, extraordinary events like the storm seem stubbornly and freakishly melodramatic.



# The deities of coincidence

By Alan Brownjohn

P. H. NEWBY:  
Feelings Have Changed  
266pp. Faber. £6.95.  
0 571 11823 2

As he pitches weirdly into view on the first page of *Feelings Have Changed*, a man with an odd walk and a whimsically peculiar name, Brock Common (short for Brockridge) seems a more than usually strange addition to the gallery of Newby anti-heroes. They are a breed admittedly strong on eccentricity (of a kind felt more than exhibited), customarily decent in behaviour, often vulnerable (though often resilient as well), and more often the victims of time or place than the masters. They have not always made the best of what they had, and disorientation is their characteristic affliction in a world which will not wait for them. But Brock Common's world looks more disordered still, as he rolls on - pursued by tribes of trackers? - through an outlandish tract of South Coast England, towards the home of his estranged wife, Becky, and his son, Frederick. In fact, he is pursued by nothing more than coincidence; and he is a

perfectly rational BBC producer, in the last days of the radio Features Department. The trouble is that he has had to settle for failure, as an artist and as a male, and try to accept it with relish instead of protest: mental contortions, therefore, not the sheer physical oddities which the opening of the book appears to promise.

We are soon deeply immersed in the real world of London in 1963, but not before Brock has experienced the first and most important of a series of coincidences which are to manoeuvre him into a wry acquiescence in another kind of life. This coincidence is the appearance of Max Kettle, a National Service acquaintance of several years before, who is about to cast the ashes of his dead son into the waters of the harbour by which Brock is standing; the priest Father Drew and Mrs Kettle are in attendance, and Brock is asked to join them. Coincidence follows Brock back to London after this macabre, beautifully achieved scene, and into Broadcasting House, where Kettle deposits a script on a subject of which Brock has himself made a passion: the American Civil War. Coincidence nudges Brock and Kettle and their wives into an uncomfortable quartet, the impotent Kettle gaining solace for his bereavement from the company of Brock's son,

and Brock gaining sex from Kettle's wife, Jill. Coincidence ensures that the four of them are left at the end in a neat rearrangement of roles, with Brock resigned from the BBC and vainly trying to hack out a passable script of his own for someone else.

Coincidence, indeed, disposes more often and more successfully in this novel than any character proposes; and it is linked, in some scenes in Upper Egypt, with the goddess Maat, who stands for the rightness of all things, whether they are good or evil (or if you like, for facing facts). Yet coincidence manages never to seem mechanical, or glibly portentous, in Mr Newby's intricate and densely-textured story. It still looks fresher, and feels more surprising, that what Louis MacNeice describes as "dog-eared chances". It is a considerable feat to have avoided dancing this small though bizarre troupe of characters in patterns that might have been too schematic, or simply unbelievable. Coincidence, finally, remains a cleverly-presented fact and never degenerates into a device.

Nevertheless, both Louis MacNeice himself, and Laurence Gilliam, Head of the late and bitterly lamented Features Department at the BBC, are equally important presiding deities in *Feelings Have Changed*; and until their deaths dur-

ing the action of the novel they are living and talking presences in it. There is an awkwardness here, compounded by the sense that the book may partly be read as a tribute to both of them. The real men have had to be grafted, as large as life or even larger, onto the working existences of the fictitious, who are bound (Brock especially) to look duller as a result. Newby makes a prefatory assertion that he has written fiction, not "a novel about the politics of broadcasting". He has really tried to write two novels. *Feelings Have Changed* is an ingenious fable of predestination, stretching out to embrace a gentle satire on the defeat of the passionate and the gifted by the tedious and the ambitious, and failing to associate the two themes in a satisfactory union. Unfortunately, no benevolent (or malign) coincidence intervenes to save Brock or Laurence Gilliam's Features Department, which is dispatched with considerable abruptness. It cannot. That was how it happened in life.

All the same, every thread in Newby's garment does make some kind of subtle connection with all the others, frequently in an unexpected and unobtrusive way; spotting the tiny links and catching the distant echoes is one of the many pleasures of a novel which is as carefully

woven as it is mordantly witty. And in avoiding contrivance Newby has also stepped aside from the path tempting him towards an easy, simplistic message. Even Father Drew, a crucial and symbolic priest who rides the harpoc waters at the beginning, who turns up on the Thames and recurs on the Nile, and who is an arch-watcher and interpreter of coincidences, becomes a tentative apostle of doubt. Ultimately at risk of sounding an agnostic, he is prepared to believe that the truth is found by those who create rather than those who believe. Feelings have indeed changed, he admits, if men and women are no longer ready to accept pain and evil as parts of a scheme of natural justice sanctioned by deities. Newby's "happy" ending, with everyone at least sorted out as their changed feelings - or their obscured inclinations - lead them, is therefore something which makes wry or gloomy or at best ambiguous, reading. But on its way to the tronies of these last pages, this witty and illuminating novel has moved through a succession of scenes, by turns chilling, or poignant, or exuberantly farcical, and presented a series of credibly alarming characters, whose shifts and changes should make any reader ponder how human lives and motives might ever be assumed to be fixed and comprehensible.

# Revenge of the innocent

By William Boyd

MOLLY KEANE:  
Good Behaviour  
245pp. Andre Deutsch. £6.50.  
0 233 97332 X

Irish history in the first two or three decades of this century has proved a fertile ground for novelists. Notable among those who have successfully exploited it are Jennifer Johnston and J. G. Farrell. Molly Keane's new novel (the previous eleven were written under the pseudonym M. J. Farrell) joins this fairly select and demanding company. *Good Behaviour* concentrates, as did *The Old Man and the Sea*, on the upper classes and landed gentry, but in Keane's novel, unlike these, the political upheavals of the time play no significant part.

The novel opens in the recent past. Aaron St Charles, the narrator, is nursing her dying mother. While she is feeding her one lunchtime, her mother chokes, vomits and dies. This prompts a hostile outburst from an old family servant, Rose. Other deaths are mentioned, events in the past referred to, and Aaron's culpability in connection with certain evils is mysteriously invoked.

Aaron seems unmoved by these accusations, though Rose's angry words do encourage her to re-examine her early life. With chapter two we enter a prolonged flashback that takes us to the end of the novel, as Aaron reconstructs her own history from her earliest years to young adulthood.

We learn of her childhood at Temple Alice, the family seat, of her

beloved elder brother Hubert, her dashing sportsman father and her elegant artistic mother. This idyll is interrupted, however, by a succession of tragedies. First, a favourite governess is sacked and disappears. Her body is washed up along the coast a few days later. Aaron grows up into an ungainly, heavy-breasted girl (Hubert, the apple of his father's eye, is lean and athletic). Then, in the First World War, Aaron's father is wounded and has a leg amputated. One summer Hubert brings Richard, a university friend, to stay. The three young people go for walks and picnics together. One night Richard slips into bed beside Aaron but does nothing more than lay his head on her breast. This, however, is quite sufficient for Aaron. She sees it as a declaration of love and harbours similar passionate feelings for Richard.

The pace of tragedy quickens: Hubert is killed in a car accident while driving with Richard; Aaron's father, the Major, takes to drink and shortly afterwards suffers a stroke which renders him a bed-ridden near-vegetable. Family life begins to collapse. The mother can't manage the mounting household accounts and soon the atmosphere at Temple Alice becomes strained and impoverished. Rose, the faithful servant, takes over the nursing of the Major, plying him with whiskey and assiduously warning his nerveless feet beneath the blankets with her bare hands. Aaron scornfully rejects the advances of the family solicitor and is then shattered to learn of Richard's engagement. Eventually the Major dies and Aaron faces her joyless future as an unmarried daughter compelled to live in a hostile environment dominated by her uncaring mother and Rose - with a dose of her own misgivings. But suddenly the

balance of power shifts when the Major's will is read out. Everything - the house, the estate - has been left to Aaron.

This, in fact, is only Aaron's side of the story. Molly Keane has presented us with a near faultless exercise in the technique known as unreliable narration. Aaron is a classic unreliable narrator of the innocent rather than the knowing sort. She knows nothing of what has really been going on, and certainly she knows far less than the reader who can construct an alternative or parallel history to supplement Aaron's hopelessly naive version. For in fact the Major is a philanderer, his wife frigid and unloving. The governess who committed suicide had been seduced by him. Furthermore, Hubert is homosexual; Richard is his lover, and the bedroom escapade was a ploy to dispel the Major's suspicions. Richard has never loved Aaron. The Major busily services every compliant female - including Rose - in the neighbourhood. After his stroke it's not just whiskey that Rose administers: the hand beneath the blankets is providing a more crucial therapy than restoring circulation.

There is an implicit sequel to the novel, covering the period from the Major's death to his wife's, many years later. It's instructive to re-read the first chapter in the light of this information. Those scant remarks and mysterious allusions refer to several decades of Aaron's meticulously exacted revenge. "All my life," she asserts at the beginning of the book.

I have done everything for the best reasons and the most unselfish motives. I have lived for the people I love, and I am at a loss to know why their lives have been at times so perplexingly unhappy.

It's only when the reader returns to these words that the thoroughgoing malice shines through the gullest pose.

*Good Behaviour* is an absorbing and elegantly written portrayal of dangerous innocence, hypocrisy and wilful self-deception. It's further enlivened by an affectionate and exact recall for its period; even if this is sometimes a little too lovingly laid on. It displays a remarkable technical virtuosity, subtly enticing the reader to contribute to and interpret the novel. The unreliable narration falters rarely (Aaron refers to events in her father's affairs in England - and feelings which she couldn't know about) but these are minor flaws in a most rewarding novel. A worthy candidate on the Booker shortlist.

# Desperate liaisons

By Paul Bailey

BRIAN MOORE:  
The Temptation of Eileen Hughes  
211pp. Cape. £6.50.  
0 224 01936 8

Eileen Hughes is a pretty young woman of limited intelligence who lives with her ailing mother in a small terrace house in Lismore in Northern Ireland. She is taken on as a shop assistant in the town's largest department store, where she is befriended by the owner's wife, Mona McAuley. Eileen becomes Mona's pet, and discovers that there are people who need never worry about money. Chief among these is Mona's husband, Bernard, a seemingly self-possessed man in his early thirties. He befriends Eileen, too, and encourages his wife to bring the girl out, to advise her on clothes and make-up, to smooth her path into the Good Life.

Such a bare résumé of the plot of *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* makes the book sound like a rag-to-riches novelette. The opening pages tempt the reader into thinking that he or she is being led into familiar fictional territory: Simple Girl at the mercy of Worldly Couple escapes from their Jaded Clutches in the Nick of Time. But further investigation reveals that Eileen is not so simple and that the worldly couple aren't so sophisticated after all. It is typical of Brian Moore's honesty that he should acknowledge that, superficially at least, there are certain resemblances to those described in the pages of women's magazines: life, unfortunately, has a nasty habit of imitating pulp fiction. Bernard, Mona and the bewildered Eileen are put through paces far more complex than any dreamed up by the fatigued imaginations of Fannie Hurst or Ethel M. Dell. From page fifty-two onwards, the novel moves on to an altogether more adventurous plane, and it remains there until the terrible story is finally told.

Since what happens to the luckless trio is both unusual and surprising, the reviewer of *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* has to practise the kind of restraint exhibited in the criticism of thrillers; he mustn't give the game away. Each one of the book's three principal characters is changed utterly by the experience of visiting London for a week in August - in Bernard's case, tragically so. His obsession with Eileen is shown to be neither sexual nor philanthropic in

origin, and Brian Moore accounts for its extraordinary nature in the most ordinary language. Such matter-of-factness in the face of the bizarre is indicative of Moore's skill as a narrator: what happens to Bernard, he implies, could happen to any desperate man who has lost faith in God and in himself as well. Bernard's misery - and it is nothing less than that - is presented boldly, without a hint of authorial intrusion. His anguish is as unstoppable as Judith Hearn's and as memorably described. It is a hallmark of Brian Moore's art that it respects and acknowledges a state of unhappiness as raw and as ugly as an open wound.

*The Temptation of Eileen Hughes*, which at first glance looks to unpromising, belongs with the best of Brian Moore's novels. I can't think of another living male novelist who writes about women with such sympathy and understanding. There isn't even the slightest trace of misogyny in his portraits of Mary Dunne and Judith Hearn and, in this book, of Mona McAuley. At first, Mona seems like one of those over-obliging, omnipresent nymphomaniacs so beloved of Harold Robbins and Jackie Collins, yet it isn't long before one discovers that her habit of picking up attractive young men in hotel lobbies has its roots in rejection and loneliness: Mona "civilized" Bernard have what is called a "civilized" arrangement. It is with Eileen herself, however, that Moore excels. It is extremely difficult to write about the not particularly intelligent without either ridiculing or patronizing them, but Moore contrives to present Eileen with complete empathy. Her upsetting ordinariness is brilliantly done: her banal aspirations are accounted for with the same respect that is afforded Bernard's hopelessness. It isn't fashionable to praise novelists for their tact, but it is that very quality in Brian Moore's writing that deserves to be situated in a measure of his intelligence and his humanity that he refuses to sit in judgment on his characters. It is, as far as I am concerned, an honourable and a considerable measure.

*A Girl on the Train*, the first book in Witold Nowak-Sokolinski's romantic trilogy *Krylia* has just been published by William Macellan (1980). William Macellan, Embury Lodge, Bath Road, Glasgow G2 4JR. £5.95. 0 85335 242 9. Set in Poland in the 1930s, the three novels - *A Girl on the Train*, *Silver Stars*, and *Fire in the Sky* - follow the career of Jan from schooldays and officer cadet training to imprisonment in the German siege of Warsaw.

# The cryptographical contribution

By John Keegan

F. H. HINSLY (with E. E. THOMAS, C. F. G. RANSOM and R. C. KNIGHT):  
British Intelligence in the Second World War  
Its Influence on Strategy and Operations  
Volume 2  
800pp. HMSO. £15.95.  
0 11 630934 2

Smiley arrived in Hamburg in mid-morning and took the airport bus to the city centre. . . . The din of the city hit him like a fire storm, causing him to forget the cold. Germany was his second nature, even his second skin. In his youth her literature had been his passion and his discipline. He could put on her language like a uniform and speak with its boldness. Yet he sensed danger in every step, for Smiley as a young man had spent half the war here in the lonely terror of the spy . . .

The game's afoot. And the reader is on Smiley's heels as they hurry both away into the half-light of the Le Carré labyrinth, paved with the headlines of forgotten victims of state, peopled with the louche, the leprous, the compromised, the semi-criminal, the ethnically of extinguished racial minorities, the have-beens of demobilized departments of deception, smear and sabotage. The air crackles with the inept transmissions of ill-trained telegraphists labouring at Morse keys under the rafters of harbour docks-houses, the streets echo with the footfalls of doomed couriers hastening to blown dead-letter drops, every stairwell creaks under the boots of the men in grey leather coats climbing to that rendezvous which will end inexorably in arc-lights, metal tables and the insistent sibilance of an insatiable interrogator. You may not understand

the plot. But the authenticity is irreproachable.

Or it is as far as line 8 of p 125 of the second volume of Professor Hinsley's official history of British Intelligence in the Second World War, when with the revelatory force of a detail of fuzzy air-photograph suddenly popping into focus, the words "Even had it been practicable to maintain agents in Germany" swim out of the print. Sorry, I'll type that again. "Even had it been practicable to maintain agents in Germany". Yes, that is what it says. No preliminary warning. No subsequent explanation. But the bald admission, none the less, that SIS (Glossary: Special or Secret Intelligence Service) had not a single agent in Belgium (p 249) and "contacts" in France (same page); it had agents in the German battleship anchorage in Norway (p 203), though it took fifteen months to establish them; it had a centre in North Africa, which "yielded little" (p 292); it made use of widespread Polish, Czech and French networks and it had its own in Switzerland; but, though the Germans certainly had agents in Britain during the war (cf Masterman), SIS (or, for variety's sake, M16) apparently did not reciprocate.

Perhaps - in Le Carré's world we could be sure of it - this is a cover story. But the tone of the work argues against the notion, which is in any case heavily undermined by what we were told in Volume 1. There it was made clear that the German victories of 1940 devastated the SIS networks, to such effect that the organization had to fight for its credibility in the months which followed. The details of the infighting were related so copiously that an unpublished review by a post-war C

Government Code and Cypher School, located at Bletchley Park, is alleged to have begun, "This is a book by a committee about committees for committees". And it is unquestionably the case that a course in Le Carré (particularly *The Looking-Glass War*) was almost a prerequisite for following the ebb and flow of relationships between SIS, M15 (counter-espionage), the service intelligence organizations (MI, MI and A1) and Special Operations Executive, the war-raised sabotage organization which was C's left-hand arm. The atmosphere of intelligence was indeed made to seem primarily "a medium for the exchange of male hatreds" and, though the emotion was not as intense as in Germany, where it is said that twelve agencies competed for the Führer's ear, was strong enough to threaten the efficient evaluation of "product". Volume 2 carries the story on. In March 1943 we find M15 arguing for an amalgamation of SIS, SOE and itself, presumably under its own charge - a campaign eventually scotched by the Prime Minister himself. "Every department", he wrote, in words Mrs Thatcher may have taken for her text, "which has waxed during the war is now considering how it can quarter its officials on the public indefinitely when peace returns. The less we encourage these illusions the better." They were still flourishing, however, at the end of the year and we must await Volume 3 for the conclusion of this story - and, as a series of tantalizing footnotes advises us - for a number of others.

But the substance of the narrative does not derive from the success (or failure) of "human intelligence". Volume 1 established that "signal intelligence" (Signal) yielded the overwhelming bulk of strategic and tactical information by which the war was directed, and it identified the

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Volume 1 familiarized us with the dimensions of Bletchley's output, codenamed Ultra (though eccentrically always Bouffant, an early cover word, for the Prime Minister). Volume 2 introduces us to the importance of Ultra's ancillary, the Y service. Y is the interception, analysis and decryption of "low-grade" traffic, that between airfields and aircraft or divisions and battalions. Its amassing is laborious and its constituent items mundane, but, if properly organized, it will yield tactical information of the greatest value. Because it operates close to the enemy's front, Y's time-lag is short and his intentions may be detected and countered sometimes before they are implemented. Thus on November 2, 1942, at the crisis of the battle of Alamein, Y intercepted

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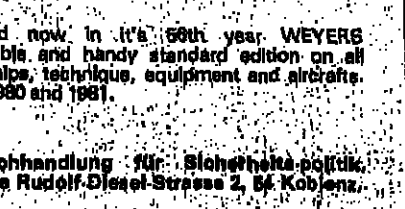
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at 0910 orders for 21st Panzer Division to counter-attack, allowing Eighth Army headquarters to organize a riposte by XXX Corps by 1000. Ultra, which Y always challenged itself to beat, had had the information at 0700 but did not get it to the front until after 21st Panzer had begun to move. Y's achievements were supplemented by those of PR (photographic reconnaissance), DF (direction finding), Traffic Analysis, which established the enemy's signal procedures, and TINA, which identifies the "fist" of individual Morse senders. TINA, as Patrick Beesley's *Very Special Intelligence* revealed, sometimes pinpointed the position of a particular U-boat even when Bletchley was not breaking the Enigma key, because the owner of a familiar "fist" was known to be aboard.

"Intelligence is rarely dramatic," wrote Rowley Scott-Farnie, head of RAF Y in the Middle East. "The best results are obtained from the continuous study of details." Volume 1 told how the pathetically under-equipped and understaffed intelligence services won the men and machines to begin studying the details. Volume 2 relates the stages by which the various services (SIS and SOE excepted) were brought under a single authority and their outputs integrated. When they were - when, for example, DF was pinpointing

transmission centres, Traffic Analysis mapping the distinctive star-shaped layout of a divisional network, TINA perhaps identifying an old friend at headquarters, PR bringing back pictures of new petrol dumps, and Enigma breaking messages from Berlin containing an unfamiliar operational cover word - the enemy's intentions could be forestalled with almost eerie prescience. So they were by Eighth Army in early July, 1942, allowing Auchinleck to fight the first battle of Alamein with the confidence that he had his forces in the right place - and, as a by-blow to victory, to destroy most of *Nachrichtenbataillon 621*, Rommel's Y organization.

The influence of intelligence on operations in the Western Desert and North Africa occupies a great deal of this volume. Rommel's reputation is thereby further enhanced. Time and again the authors emphasize the general point, made by every other rational writer on the subject of intelligence, that foreknowledge is no guarantee of victory. Their analysis of the course of the Gazala battle, in May 1942, amply bears it out. Both Y and, to a lesser extent, Ultra (not yet integrated - a mistake soon corrected) gave warning of Rommel's attack. Even so, the right dispositions were not adopted; but, while that could be and was retrieved, what could not have been allowed for was Rommel's almost insane recklessness during the course of the battle. Surrounded and short of supplies, he might have been expected to attempt retreat. Instead ("mon centre cède, ma droite recule, situation excellente"), he attacked and won the day.

Rommel's extraordinary tactical flair is all the explanation needed for Montgomery's extreme caution in dealing with him during Alamein and after. The field-marshal's professional critics will mine this volume for further proof of his "stickiness" and they will not go away empty-handed. They will also be able to feed their distaste for the "egotism" and "arrogance" alleged against him by the envious and the bruised. He certainly caused widespread irritation by his manner, which he implied that Ultra came to him through second sight rather than Bletchley. But his use of the material cannot really be faulted. His overriding duty in November and December, 1942, was to win the greatest possible victory at the least possible risk and that he achieved. He would not have been forgiven any setbacks into which Ultra's exposition of a chance for a quick kill might have tempted him.

The very full discussion of the Tunisian stage of the North African war will most interest experts in that bitter but footnote campaign. Those who seek fuller explanation of how the Japanese came so wholly to surprise the British in Malaya, a far more important episode, will be disappointed. Blameworthy as Percival

and his staff of sleepheads appear to remain, they were not helped by London, whose assessments were dilatory and inept. The air campaign against Germany, on the other hand, which lay at the heart of British strategy, is copiously analysed. Webster and Frankland have already bared the bones of the sorry story: that in 1941 Bomber Command lost more air crew over Germany than it killed Germans, and that in 1942, during a typical two-month period, sixty per cent of aircraft dropped their bombs more than five miles from the target. The Luftwaffe, with only two hundred bombers in the west, was achieving far more, simply by obliging the British to keep 1,400 fighters at home as a precautionary measure. In this misbalance of effort the Ministry of Economic Warfare was much to be blamed. Until the beginning of 1943 it consistently overestimated the effect of bombing on the German economy, sometimes as much as twentyfold; and its forecasts of German economic performance in general were calculated with an abandon which makes George Brown's Department of Economic Affairs appear a temple of the wise virgins. In June 1942, when one and a half million potential munition workers still served as maids in German households, MEW advised that "Germany's economic resources are wholly mobilized and wholly engaged". Made more cautious by the spring of 1943, perhaps by the success of the U-boats in the battle of the Atlantic, it was still forecasting that Germany's war potential would continue to decline - and that at a moment when Speer's reorganization of production was about to lead to a phenomenal acceleration in the output of every category of weapon. Almost all that can be said by way of exculpation of the economists' over-optimism is that it was exceeded by the expectations, held most invincibly by the Prime Minister, of what Resistance could achieve.

As a story of the interplay of one intelligence organization and another, nothing in Volume 2 exceeds in interest that of Naval Intelligence Division's war with the *Beobachtungsdienst*. It is, for one thing, particularly well told, so that the narrative of the sea battles, intrinsically more difficult to write than that of land battles, as anyone who has tried knows, are the clearest in the book. But it has to do also with the very great success of the Germans in Bletchleying the British. For reasons of convenience, which the authors roundly condemn, the Admiralty did not adopt the other services' machine encipherment but clung to codes superenciphered. The mathematics of several were broken early by the B-Dienst, yielding successes which the Admiralty explained by extraneous factors (the psychology of insecurity is one of the most intriguing sub-plots in the book: while the Admiralty put breaks down to German retrieval of codes from

sunken ships, the Germans commonly ascribed them to Italian duplicity or incompetence - a particularly cruel libel since Italian naval cypher proved unbreakable - or to the supposed activities of SIS).

The B-Dienst's most important success was in reading Naval Cypher No 3, used to fight the battle of the Atlantic, from February 1942 until June 1943. Occasionally it lost the key, but from February 1943, when the U-boats trembled on the edge of victory, it was sometimes decrypting convoy movement signals ten to twenty hours in advance. It was a crowning mercy that Bletchley had broken the U-boat Enigma key, Shark, in December and was thus reading the orders moving U-boats to points of interception. Not always in time, however, to order a safe re-routing (which the Germans might in any case succeed in reading); moreover, so numerous had the U-boats become by early 1943 that the length of their patrol lines was in itself sometimes enough to ensure contact with convoys. In this respect, the tactics of the battle of the Atlantic differed little from those of Nelson in the Mediterranean during 1798. As a result, it was other factors, of a cruder military significance, which eventually tipped the balance. One was ship-borne radar, which detected U-boats when they surfaced to attack (oh, that submarines still had to); it allowed the American escorts of Convoy UGS 6 to bring its forty ships through a running battle with twenty U-boats between March 12 and 19, 1943, for the loss of only four. Another was the arrival of escort aircraft carriers in numbers which made the immediate environs of a convoy impenetrable to surfaced U-boats. The clincher was the closing of the "air-gap" in mid-Atlantic, which disappeared when new long-range patrol aircraft from Britain and America could meet at the half-way point. No U-boat was then safe for long on the surface. And a permanently submerged U-boat was not an effective weapon of war. In frustrated acceptance of that fact, Dönitz withdrew his wolf-packs from the Atlantic in May, 1943.

It is testimony to the scrupulous objectivity of the authors that all this evidence is laid before the reader at the appropriate point, and that not a whit more is claimed for Ultra, or any other agency of intelligence, than the facts can stand. And scholarship is but one of the book's many virtues. Its index is even better than the first volume's, its appendices more luxurious, its footnotes, at the bottom of the page, as copious as ever and typographical errors as hard to find as a break into a Barracuda cypher. Its refusal to name names, even when available elsewhere, remains an irritation and the authors might have anticipated the bibliographer's promise for Volume 3 by citing a few titles which are an essential commentary to the Ultra story, notably Peter Calvocoressi's and Aileen Clayton's memoirs of their war work. But almost anything can be forgiven a production which provides fold-out maps.

And yet the sensation with which one leaves the book is one of depression. For it provides, in its own way, a sort of key to the character of Britain's part in the Second World War. In a throw-away line on p. 258, the authors consider the argument that in mid-1941 "naval blockade, such subversion as SOE might accomplish and the bomber had become Great Britain's only offensive weapons". At a comparable point in the First World War, the country had the largest navy in the world, had just created the world's fourth largest army and was on the way to building the largest air force. Heaven help that military power should ever be the index of a nation's worth. But, if British history in the twentieth century is a chronicle of decline, then the Ultra story goes to reinforce it. On the one hand, it allows us to see what was really important to Whitehall during 1941-43, the answer being the convoy battles first, air defence of the United Kingdom second, bombing third and desert warfare a good way fourth - an almost wholly defensive commitment and an embarrassingly lopsided effort for a country which had begun the war with a GNP only a third smaller than Germany's. On the other, it partakes of that intellectual self-congratulation by which the swiftness of the Ultra story is glorified. We may not have fielded as many divisions as the Russians, or built as many tanks as the Americans, its message seems to go, but when it came to brains...

Yet there was no monopoly of brains. The Russians, if insecure with many of their cyphers, ran a number of espionage networks which, even allowing for the extravagance of legend, supplied very high-grade intelligence directly to the Kremlin. The Americans broke the Japanese Enigma apparently on their own and, in the Magic organization, had a system closely similar to Ultra. Its output was instrumental to the winning of Midway which reversed the whole course of the war in the Pacific. William Friedman, the genius of their cryptanalytic service, is widely regarded as the greatest cryptanalyst who ever lived. But neutral Sweden had, in Arne Beurling, one who ran him close. It was he who succeeded in breaking the ten-wheel *Geheimschreiber* cyphers, regarded by Bletchley as the most serious challenge it faced in the war. And it was his crypts, transmitted home via the British naval attaché in Stockholm, which the Naval Intelligence Division so highly valued for keeping track of the German surface fleet. A little less hubris would sit well with the telling of the Enigma story at least by others. Professor Hinsley has struck exactly the right key.

It has been a big problem for Goeb and the other protagonists of the rehabilitation of Schink and his some 200 comrades (156 of whom were arrested with him). There has been one bigger obstacle to their public recognition in West Germany (see below), but dearth of evidence is the major problem with this book, which is avowedly a contribution to the campaign. The fragments of written sources and memories do not add up to a coherent story, except in the broadest outline. Goeb's long passages of imaginative reconstruction, which are not indicated as such, are a labour of simple devotion and advocacy. They are also silted and one-dimensional. Adults who in general doubt the capacity of teenagers to make strong moral or political judgments are, it is true, ignorant and prejudiced, but Goeb goes too far in the other direction. The young people are too nice. The fictional conversations of Schink and his friends are improbably heavy with purpose, and impossibly serious. The odd moments of just for adventure and inventive high spirits which Goeb does allow them only make these passages grate the more.

However, Goeb is careful not to present their seriousness as political in any precise or programmatic sense. In allowed to make such applications. not brothers and sisters. No, there is no point in the sister saying that she doesn't care about the money: giving financial compensation is what this office is here for. It is not here to make declarations about the personal character, or political or legal status of people killed by the Gestapo.

## Edelweiss and infamy

By Tim Mason

ALEXANDER GOEB:

Er war sechzehn als man ihn hängte  
Das kurze Leben des Widerstands-  
kämpfers Bartholomäus Schink  
159pp. Hamburg. Rowholt DMS,80  
3 499 14768 8

For compelling reasons the Federal Republic of Germany is a state founded upon and dedicated to the rule of law: the Third Reich, it is held, was above all a lawless state. The nature of modern states, however, (also the nature of positive law) is such that this ambition is not easy to sustain. In fact, the state pursues the rule of law, the less its legal administration appears to be just, or even sensible. Surreal absurdities are perpetrated and perfectly explained in the name of judicial precision. What is more, the dedication of the state to the perfect rule of law encourages both rulers and ruled to believe that every conceivable problem must have a judicial solution - what is the rule of law worth if its reach is limited?

Alexander Goeb's brief imaginative reconstruction of the life of a German boy, publicly hanged at the age of sixteen on November 10, 1944, for armed resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, contains as an appendix the verbatim record of the author's confrontation last year with the civil servant in charge of the "compensation" department of the interior administration of the district of Cologne. Was Bartholomäus Schink a hero of the anti-Nazi resistance, or was he an adolescent gangster? Who can decide this? Like all serious West German civil servants, Dr Dette is omniscient. (He is also very patient - perhaps because he sympathizes with the impassioned advocate of the dead boy, perhaps because he knows that his output will be instrumental to the winning of Midway which reversed the whole course of the war in the Pacific. William Friedman, the genius of their cryptanalytic service, is widely regarded as the greatest cryptanalyst who ever lived. But neutral Sweden had, in Arne Beurling, one who ran him close. It was he who succeeded in breaking the ten-wheel *Geheimschreiber* cyphers, regarded by Bletchley as the most serious challenge it faced in the war. And it was his crypts, transmitted home via the British naval attaché in Stockholm, which the Naval Intelligence Division so highly valued for keeping track of the German surface fleet. A little less hubris would sit well with the telling of the Enigma story at least by others. Professor Hinsley has struck exactly the right key.)

Yes, it is correct that Schink's mother applied in 1952 for the compensation available to the next-of-kin of people persecuted by the Nazi regime. Yes, the case did take rather a long time to adjudicate, because the Gestapo files were needed for another case which was given priority. Yes, after ten years his mother was formally notified that Schink could not be recognized as a political victim of Nazi persecution in the sense of the Compensation Law. No, this did not mean that the author, in 1962, thought that he had just been a violent delinquent; it was not their job to make that kind of judgment, only to decide whether persecution had been clearly political. The evidence was inadequate. It was mostly the evidence of Gestapo records from 1944, and... no, the compensation officials did not automatically adopt the Gestapo's (self-interested and mendacious) view that Schink's gang belonged to the criminal underworld of the contrary. Yes, there is now more evidence that Schink and his band of Edelweiss Pirates, as they called themselves, did have political motives for repeatedly beating up groups of uniformed Hitler Youth; for giving assistance to Jews, deserters from the German Army and Russian slave labourers who fled from their barracks; for assassinating the Nazi party boss of their corner of the Cologne suburb of Ehrenfeld; for launching a heavily armed attack on the police station where a girl comrade was imprisoned; for being on the verge of blowing the local Gestapo headquarters into the sky with TNT, when they were caught and tortured until they confessed.

Yes, there is more evidence, but it is not possible to re-open the case, because the Compensation Law laid down that all applications had to be filed by December 31, 1959. Schink's mother had died in the meantime, so an application by his sister would be a new application - it is too late, and anyway only parents and children are

respect of their public motives, he insists on the primacy of a simple youthful hatred of regimentation, a straightforward hatred of cruel injustice, and the generation of an intense group solidarity. This is compelling. It is possible, too, that they really did overcome their inhibitions about killing by reasoning that the Nazis would kill them, whether or not they killed first - a sound, practical moral judgment in 1944. However, their movement to this point, to the (very simple) acquisition and use, in their last months at large, of revolvers, bazookas and TNT is presented in a mechanical and sketchy way which at times verges on the apologetic.

Theft was not only an adventure for this kind of gang, of which there were some thirty in the Rhine-Ruhr area by late 1944 - in a system in which every necessity of life was administered, it

caused of fifty cases of breaking and entering. The role of theft in the dynamic of its political development can never be known, even approximately. It is lost in the ambiguities of youthful defiance and in the brutal summariness of the Gestapo's procedures. But it is the sort of open question which should be signalled as such. It was well identified in the large exhibition, "Resistance and Persecution in Cologne 1933-1945", presented by the city archive in 1974.

The question is important secondly for an understanding of the public reaction to the gang, both at the time and in the conflicts over "rehabilitation". The direct expression of moral outrage against Nazism by the regime's German subjects was - unless the latter happened to be officers of the General Staff - always associated with actions which were normally criminal. Normally that is, even before the regime re-wrote the criminal code in rubber ink. Acts of premeditated violence against persons or property, creating a riot or sabotaging production were difficult things for precisely those people to do who had a basic commitment to decency and humane standards of conduct - and who were for this reason opponents of the regime. Most such people were trapped. The adult resistance organizations of the labour movement achieved miracles of immunity, endurance and solidarity in their struggle; in the forms of their resistance activities they expressed exactly the standards of behaviour to which they were committed. They were, with very few exceptions, not capable of preparing to blow up a police station and its occupants. The Gestapo plausibly accused the gangs of the Cologne area (some of which included many adult Frenchmen and Poles) of twenty-nine murders; five of the dead were Nazi party officials, and six of them policemen, among whom was the head of the Gestapo for the whole city. Older Social Democrats were probably disconcerted by these "kids" who did not hesitate.

The young people, who seem to have been innocent of party politics, were not holding out for an opportunity to act politically. They had both the ardour and the need to establish a public presence, to live expressively and openly beyond the law - with their emblems, distinctive dress, guitar music and slang. They had the urgency necessary to base their serious independence upon theft, to aid the victims and kill the persecutors, now. Respectable a-political people in the suburb were probably less disconcerted than incensed and alarmed - the public hanging of Schink and his comrades was well attended. The specific forms of their resistance, admirably the only forms available to the man or woman in the German rubble, were not such as to win them many friends among the remaining citizens of Ehrenfeld (who were mostly women and old men). For this reason the gangs could not develop into a popular army of liberation.

A parallel confusion or uncertainty of judgment persisted after the war, both among German politicians and administrators and among historians (myself included). Anti-social, criminal, politically on the left... The catalogue of the 1974 Cologne exhibition still hovered in its interpretation of the gangs. Detlev Peukert and other young German historians are currently demonstrating (after the pioneering essay by Daniel Horin in the *Journal of Social History*, 1973), that this was the wrong kind of uncertainty to entertain about that kind of resistance. They are employing a scholarly rigour which Goeb chose to eschew. The only appropriate uncertainty is one about the verifiable facts. Goeb begins, more or less, with Schink aged ten, seeing his Jewish father being beaten to death in the street during the pogrom of November 9-10, 1938. This is probably a verified fact (from interviews with relatives and survivors). Goeb ends more or less with Gestapo officers stubbing out their cigarettes on Schink's back. This may be less exact, but it will do.



The pilot and co-pilot of a Wellington bomber - one of a group of studies of RAF aircrew in War Photographs 1939-45 by Cecil Beaton (191pp. Imperial War Museum/Jane's. £12.95. 0 7106 0136 0).

were killed or driven to suicide. Like most of these opponents of Nazi rule who had no formal organization (an underground party cell, or a church), the Edelweiss Pirates did not leave much evidence of their thoughts and intentions, only of the bare facts of their deeds. The words on the cellar walls were new evidence, dramatic rather than conclusive.

This has been a big problem for Goeb and the other protagonists of the rehabilitation of Schink and his some 200 comrades (156 of whom were arrested with him). There has been one bigger obstacle to their public recognition in West Germany (see below), but dearth of evidence is the major problem with this book, which is avowedly a contribution to the campaign. The fragments of written sources and memories do not add up to a coherent story, except in the broadest outline. Goeb's long passages of imaginative reconstruction, which are not indicated as such, are a labour of simple devotion and advocacy. They are also silted and one-dimensional. Adults who in general doubt the capacity of teenagers to make strong moral or political judgments are, it is true, ignorant and prejudiced, but Goeb goes too far in the other direction. The young people are too nice. The fictional conversations of Schink and his friends are improbably heavy with purpose, and impossibly serious. The odd moments of just for adventure and inventive high spirits which Goeb does allow them only make these passages grate the more.

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## The heavy metal

By Bryan Ranft

RONALD BASSETT:  
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286pp. Macmillan. £9.95  
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0 7091 8863 3

The naval history of the two World Wars seems to have an unending appeal to publishers and, presumably, readers. This has produced a genre of writing difficult to classify. It is certainly not authoritative history, although, at its best, it is based on wide reading in reputable secondary sources. It rarely quotes the authority for its statements and makes frequent use of quotation without attribution and, more disturbingly, introduces into what is presented as history versions of the precise words and even inner reflections of its characters.

Its attractions to both authors and readers are, however, understandable. Naval vessels from the dashing destroyer to the massive, and perhaps always obsolescent, battleship, have been among man's greatest technological achievements. The battles in which they have fought in that hostile element, the sea, have a dramatic quality often lacking in land fighting, and they have been commanded and manned by an extraordinarily rich variety of professional fighting men. What marks the good from the bad is the ability to tell a good story, the standard of illustrations and, even more, the quality of the writing, and, above all, the author's appreciation, whether from personal experience or imaginative insight, of the technical and human factors which led to victory or defeat.

Ronald Bassett's book certainly meets these requirements. *Battle Cruisers*, from Fisher's Invincible, blown up at Jutland, to the heavily-armed Hood and Repulse, certainly among the most beautiful and technically impressive warships ever built, and their fighting careers in

cluded some of the high drama of naval warfare. Bassett, a former naval officer, tells the story of their design and their careers with accuracy and judgment and supplements it with perceptive comments, strongly sympathetic to the lower deck, on the life style and attitudes of their crews. All this is done against the wider strategic background of the two wars. The Falkland Islands and Jutland provide Bassett with obvious centre-pieces for the first, and the sinking of the Hood by the Bismarck and of the Repulse by Japanese aircraft for the second. Their uniquely high speed, which was the clue to their success at the Falklands, was achieved only at the cost of deficient protection which contributed to Jutland. Bassett's work would have gained in interest if he had been aware of the article by Jon Sumida in the *Journal of Modern History* for June 1979, which throws new light on Fisher's evaluation of the relative merits of the battleship and the battle-cruiser.

The exploits of Admiral von Speer's cruiser squadron in the early months of the First World War have

already been extensively and expertly treated both in the authoritative general histories and in several competent monographs. Again, the attraction is understandable. It is a story combining high professional skill, audacity and humanity on the German side, building up to the Royal Navy's shattering defeat at Jutland. A little less hubris would sit well with the telling of the Enigma story at least by others. Professor Hinsley has struck exactly the right key.

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## A lady of the moment

By Patrick O'Connor

CHRISTIANE ISSARTIEL:  
Les Dames aux Camélias  
De l'histoire à la légende  
173pp. Paris: Chêne/Hachette.  
2 85108 274 4

No other nineteenth-century courtesan, in literature or in history, has enjoyed such uninterrupted fame and popularity as the Lady of the Camélias. In our own time this has been mostly due to *La Traviata*, but even without Verdi's genius the story has had a fascination far outweighing any other tale of unrequited or tragic love among the ladies laughingly called "les Grandes Horizontales". Why should this story have held the attention so solidly when the others — Champfleury's Mariette, Méliac and Halévy's Frou-Frou, and even Murger's *Les Femmes de Paris* (despite Puccini) — have been relegated to obscurity? The original notoriety of Dumas's novel arose from the Parisian public's curiosity about its central character who, not long dead, was still a well-remembered figure from "those theatres, cafés and parties at which the gentlemen of the day met the ladies of the moment".

The three *Dames aux Camélias*, who give this book its title, are the original model Marie Duplessis, Marguerite Gautier, the character in Dumas's novel and play, and Violetta Valéry, the heroine of *La Traviata*. Alphonsine Plessis, who took the name Marie in her chosen profession, was descended from the poverty-stricken seigneurs of Mesnil d'Argenteuil. Her début in the world of fashion is obscured by legends (such as the one that she was noticed by her first admirer eating a cornet of fried potatoes on the Pont-Neuf, whereupon he picked her up in his carriage) but by the age of seventeen she had become the mistress of a young vicar at the Ministry of the Interior. She passed from one lover to another until at one point, according to Villemessant (the founder of *Le Figaro*), seven young men who had fallen in love with her wanted to form themselves into a society of admirers — one for each day of the week.

By the age of twenty-one she had already contracted the distemper of which she was to die two years later, and at Spa she met the elderly Baron de Stackelberg, who paid her to give up prostitution because of the resemblance she bore to his deceased daughter. The demi-monde recalled her, however, and it was during the last months of her life that she enjoyed brief liaisons with Dumas fils, Franz Liszt and Count Edouard de Perreux. She and Perreux were married in London in February 1846, less than a year before her death, by which time they had already parted. That Perreux, rather than Dumas fils himself, is the original model for Armand Duval seems fairly certain. Their separation seems to have come about because of quarrels and jealousy, whereas Dumas's father did persuade him to leave Marie, as in the story, for fear of his ruin. But surely also for fear of disease? Because tuberculosis is romanticized in *La Dame aux Camélias* and in Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème* the fact has been obscured that what most of the unfortunate courtesans suffered from was not consumption but syphilis.

The narrator of Dumas's novel says in the prologue, "It will seem absurd to many people, but I have unbounded sympathy for women of this kind, and I do not think it necessary to apologize for such sympathy." The book takes the always attractive form of a narrative told to the author by a young friend as they sit by the fire. The first scene depicts their meeting after the sale of Marguerite's effects, and proceeds to the gruesome exhumation of her body so that Armand may gaze on her now rotting countenance for the last

time. The story which follows is therefore to be read with foreknowledge of the tragic ending. It is set in the small, candle-lit rooms of the 1840s; Marguerite's own apartment is modest compared with the opulent settings we have become used to on the operatic stage and she can open the window to shout across the courtyard to her confidante, Mme Prudence. The dramatized version simplifies the action to such an extent that hardly any changes needed to be made to turn it into an opera libretto.

It was the heroine's sufferings which fascinated Victorian audiences and her death which allowed them to sympathize with her. No one wanted to extend any charity towards courtesans like La Pava, who were clever enough to convert their jewels and carriages into stocks and bonds before age took away their clients. The key to the rôle of Marguerite is thus expressed in the famous line about the fallen woman being unable to raise herself whatever else she may be capable of. It was in this speech (which in *La Traviata* became the aria "Addio del passato") that Duse was said to have been at her greatest, whereas Bernhardt excelled in the scenes of frivolous sparkle, as well as in the death scene.

Christiane Issartiel's book treats the subject in a romantic fashion, which is wholly suitable, and, although she neither goes deeply enough into its historical origins, nor does full justice to Dumas and his later interpreters, to whom she devotes the third part of her text, the attraction of *La Dame aux Camélias* remains intact. It would take a much longer book to chronicle all the actresses, singers and dancers who have performed in the rôle (there have been at least four ballets on the subject since the war, the most recent cruelly referred to by one of its detractors as "la triviale"), so naturally the author concentrates on her own favourites. As well as Duse and Bernhardt, these include Ida Rubinstein, Ludmilla Pitoëff and Yvonne Printemps, but there is no Tallulah Bankhead and, a more serious omission, no Mary Garden.

It has now largely been forgotten that there was another opera based on Dumas's play. This was *Camille* by Hamilton Forrest, which Garden commissioned in 1924. Bernhardt's tour operators insisted that no audience in the United States would go to see the play unless it had this simplified title, which must have confused quite a few people as Camille is usually a boy's name and no character in the play bears it. Forrest had been an office-boy working for Samuel Insull, the Chicago Grand Opera's director, when Garden discovered him. Despite the publicity surrounding the first performance of an American opera, which was more of a rarity than it is now, the libretto was in French. In her autobiography Garden commented, "It was a pretty dismal failure . . . I just wanted to give an American a chance, and I wanted an American 'grand opera'! It interested me greatly to do it but it didn't interest the public at all." She appeared in a red Etrope wig and made her farewell to Armand on the telephone rather than by letter. There were several other drastic modernizations of the old plot but the scene in the gambling-hell in which Armand insults Marguerite by hurling money at her, was as before. This scene is in the book, where the insult is crueler for being more calculated. After a brief reunion, in which they sleep together for the last time, Armand sends five hundred francs with a note saying he forgot to pay. This is the last Marguerite hears from him.

The copious illustrations in the book show how the theatre-going public came to accept an increasingly mature Marguerite (or Violetta), as the older, worldly-wise woman with whom the young hero falls in love. Marie Duplessis's lovers would hardly have recognized their old flame in the tragic masks that have become

the modern image of her. The emphasis has moved away from the no longer shocking idea of free love, to a more titillating notion of a disparity in age and experience. It owes something also to the rôle in Verdi's opera, which needs to be sung by a soprano of great power who can encompass the wide range of the music. If one takes Callas as the ideal interpreter of the rôle, as Mille Issartiel does, there is no need to look further than the first scene of the opera and Callas's attack on her opening line in the *Brindisi* "Tra voi saprò dividere — il tempo mio giocondo". This is no twenty-year-old, but a woman who commands a grand salon, a fleet of servants and who, quite incredibly, dismisses her wealthy protector on the spot the moment Armand/Alfredo has declared his interest. It comes as no surprise to find her capable of withstanding pain, suffering and a lonely death for the sake of her mistaken idealization of innocence. It is this mood of heightened drama that has sustained an interest in the story for so long, and it was in Callas's portrayal that the terror and desperation of the dying woman found its greatest expression.

## The Liberation spirit

By John Weightman

ELSA TRIOLET:  
Chroniques Théâtrales  
325pp. Paris: Gallimard.  
JEAN VILAR:  
Mémento  
Du 29 novembre 1952 au 1er septembre 1955  
336pp. Paris: Gallimard.

Some thirty years ago, the French theatre was still in the immediate post-war phase of excitement, when it served simultaneously as a reaffirmation of the national ethos, a vehicle for Liberation idealism and a general outlet for the creativity that had been stifled during the Occupation. These two books take us back to those stirring times, and provide invaluable insights for the reader interested in the French theatre as a historical phenomenon. The fact that they offer a rich harvest of contradictions only proves how volatile and deeply irrational the theatre can be as a social indicator. The interplay between collective forces, individual personalities, economic constraints and conflicting dramatic traditions is so complex that almost any generalization one feels inclined to make begins to crumble as soon as it is formulated.

For instance, both Elsa Triolet and Jean Vilar were known as left-wing personalities, but it is not easy to decide how far the contents of these volumes can be significantly described as left-wing. The late Mme Triolet, a French novelist of Russian origin and the wife of the poet Louis Aragon, was for a time the dramatic critic of the Communist periodical *Le Peuple français*, edited by her husband. This famous couple (in which the male celebrated the female, in a sort of modern version of *l'amour courtois*, whereas, in the contemporary world, it was the female who celebrated the male, in spite of her commitment to the cause of Women's Liberation) belonged officially to the hard Stalinist trend within the Communist Party.

But in this selection of Triolet's theatre articles, there is only one out-and-out Communist piece, and it has nothing to do with France: it is a polemic and totally unconvincing disquisition on theatrical arguments within the Soviet Union, and, being out of key with the rest, may only be present as a conventional salute to orthodoxy. Apart from that, Mme Triolet seems honestly to voice her personal likes and dislikes, and some of them might be difficult

to defend from a strictly Marxist point of view. She enthuses about Maurice Chevalier's one-man performances, but was not Chevalier a supreme French master of all the social "bad faith" of Anglo-American show-business? She provides an eloquent obituary for Christian Bérard, yet Bérard was a decadent, homosexual artist-designer, whom it would have been illegitimate to praise, one imagines, in the *Littérature* *Gazette*; admittedly, Mme Triolet mentions neither homosexuality nor decadence.

It is interesting to see how she copes with some of the notable theatrical events of the period: Barrault's presentation of Claudel's *Le Soulier de Satin*, which clearly bored her to distraction, but which she can't bring herself fully to condemn, perhaps because Claudel, in spite of his aggressive and archaic Catholicism, was one of those *valeurs françaises* it was important to respect at the time; Barrault and Camus's collaborative effort, *L'Enfer de Sade*, which she has the courage to dismiss as a total failure, but does not really bother to analyse philosophically or aesthetically; Sartre's *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, which she sees as another great mistake, without subjecting it to the political critique one might expect. Perhaps she was more instinctive and emotional than theoretical, and belonging to the upper reaches of the Communist hierarchy, could allow herself to be idiosyncratic. At any rate, without constituting French theatrical criticism, her articles are full of surprises, and even have a sort of naive freshness.

She saw the beginnings of Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire and being no more than a tepid Brechtian she has some sharp things to say about one of its earliest presentations, *La Mère Courage*. Witty enough, she dubs Vilar "Le Père Courage", a very appropriate nickname, given all the difficulties and struggles his diary reveals. *Mémento* is part professional jottings about work in progress, part travel diary, and about the running battle between the director of the TNP and the government officials administering the state subsidy, although the volume includes notes elucidating some of the more cryptic contemporary references, it unfortunately has no preface to tell us whether or not this is the whole of Vilar's *Nachlass*. Briefly, but they are crammed with interesting details about Vilar's personality, his ideas on the theatre and the inner workings of the TNP.

He himself seems to have realized, more or less lucidly, that he was not all of a piece. He was at once a democrat, by conviction (his father

had been a shoemaker in the little Mediterranean town of Sète, and he never lost his proletarian sensibilities) and a perfectionist autocrat by temperament. It is significant that he should express great admiration for Lenin, particularly as a writer — "le génie, la hauteur de l'esprit, l'impalpable sens critique . . . le seul homme de raison et d'action qui sache écarter le grand rêve du marche éternel, de l'individualisme solitaire . . ." — while emphasizing again and again the delight he took in performing the part of Molière's Don Juan, the embodiment of aristocratic anarchism. Since the TNP was the theatrical community, working according to *les méthodes artisanales* in the Copecau manner in order to make theatre a kind of self-sufficient activity within the body politic, one would expect Vilar to be a Copecau disciple, but he rejects the suggestion, saying he has nothing in common with that upper-class Catholic and feels himself closer to Antoine, the earlier, realistic innovator.

Although he was constantly suspected in government circles of being a Communist, he had no belief in specifically left-wing theatre — "Abî théâtre populaire, que d'idolâtres on commet en ton nom!" — and all his great successes were with non-contemporary, classical works. He had a special respect for Corneille, whom some left-wing critics have termed proto-Fascist, and declares, in the course of a fascinating analysis of *Cinna*, that it is more "demystifying" in the political sense than "l'importation de la culture des œuvres engagées contemporaines", an opinion which would have been a large stone in Sartre's garden, had it been made public at the time.

He was also a workaholic, afflicted simultaneously with three physical disabilities: a hernia, stomach ulcers and arthritis. In spite of this, he went on performing, sometimes with a nurse in the wings in case he collapsed, and toured extensively, noting his impressions of the various national atmospheres. In Eastern Europe, notably, the instinctive anarchist often gets the better of the Lenin-admirer.

On the whole, he displays a very French pattern of conflicting tensions, and the fragmentary form of the book, with its mixture of exemplary anecdotes, aphorisms and harsh self-analysis, is very much in the moralist tradition. Vilar may never have won outstanding personal fame as an actor, but *Mémento* shows him to have been an absolutely dedicated *animateur*, and a remarkably unpretentious, broad-minded man of the theatre.



Grete Garbo as Marguerite Gautier in *Camille* (1937) — an unpublished caricature by "Vicky" from a private collection.

FRANÇOISE GIROUD:  
Une femme honorable  
380pp. Paris: Fayard.  
2 213 01006 4

She wasn't an easy woman to deal with. *La mère Curie*: always right, determined to get her way, lacking a sense of humour — a great help to single-mindedness — and not above appealing to feminine weakness (of which she had little) to break her will (of which she had lots). Timid, and one would think intimidating, tactful, strong of memory, methodical, with a great capacity for concentration. Exasperating in her iron frailty: one is not surprised to hear her chief research assistant pounding his fists on her locked door and calling her a camel — not the familiar *chameau* either, but the academically scrupulous feminine: *chamelette*! Withal, a great scientist in her own right, kind and helpful to the young researchers in her laboratory. "In her own right" might be the theme of Françoise Giroud's new biography, as it probably was of much of her own striving.

Marie Skłodowska (1867-1934). Mania to her family, was born in Warsaw and always remained a Polish patriot, suspicious of Russian oppression. Orphaned of her mother, she grew up with her father — a gymnast teacher of mathematics and physics — her brother and her sisters. Something of a dreamer, who lost his savings in a silly speculation, Wladislaw Skłodowski was more interested in music, science and literature than in a career: his family united, cultivated, and not exactly poor but fallen on hard times as the middle classes know them.

The young Skłodowska spoke five languages, and aspired to higher education. But higher education, available to their brother, was not to be had in Poland where women were not admitted to university. So, Bronia, Marie's elder sister, saved enough money giving private lessons and borrowed some of Marie's savings to go and study medicine in Paris, where she eventually married and set up in practice with a fellow Polish exile. Meanwhile, six years as a governess-cum-tutor enabled Marie to save enough for the fourth-class train fare to Paris and a year's tuition there. Not because French science of the *fin-de-siècle* was particularly brilliant, or even because French mathematics was traditionally strong, but because the Skłodowskis were francophiles and Marie had always dreamed of Claude Bernard and the Sorbonne. So, in 1891, at twenty-four she joined her sister and brother-in-law in Paris.

It would be wrong to say that she never looked back, since, despite their modest circumstances, the Skłodowskis seem to have done a lot of travelling back and forth; and the unsentimental Marie traced her most sentimental lines when writing about the Vistula's sandy shores. But academically, however strait the path, it would run straight and upward: first of her class in Physics, second in Mathematics, Marie had found her calling. In Pierre Curie she would meet the ideal collaborator. A brilliant experimentalist, Curie was chiefly interested in the varieties of magnetism which — a trait of the times — seem to have included spiritism, table-turning and a regard for other forces that must have seemed akin to X-rays. Working alone or with his brother, he had already made important discoveries in the field of magnetism and electricity. When they met in 1894, Curie was thirty-five, Marie twenty-seven.

Solitary, eccentric, uncompetitive, the man seems to have lived only for Physics. Although sharing in the humanitarianism of his generation, Pierre persuaded Marie that she could not divide herself between research and Polish patriotism — or anything else. Science was a jealous mistress. It could tolerate the occasional escapade — sympathy for Dreyfus, a signature to the Republican cause, a contribution to the Russian revolution in 1905 — but no more. Marie was persuaded. With the exception of the war years, 1914-18, there would be no room in her life for causes — not Polish independence,

not feminism — other than scientific ones. As for Pierre, who feared that women's demands for demonstrations of love meant time lost to work and thought, he found an ideal companion, the woman of genius he always hoped to meet and a fellow-monomaniac with whom to share his life, that is his work. In 1895 Marie and Pierre were married — in a civil ceremony, of course — and spent their honeymoon cycling through the countryside on their most welcome wedding gift. Robert Reid's biography of Marie Curie (1974) describes the pair of lovers in love with their new pieces of technology, and the freedom to travel in the following years that gave Marie some of her clearest memories of happiness.

The obsessive nature of scientific discovery has never really been described (June Goodfield's recent *An Imagined World* is a happy exception). Yet the Curies' story remains incomplete without it. Pierre far more than Marie failed for a long time to get the recognition he deserved — and quietly craved. But the greatest frustrations either endured lay in the nature of their disciplines: the tedious slogging, the experiments endlessly repeated, the errors, the failures and need to begin once again, the criticism, and the inevitable professional jealousies and feuds. Only true love (and love tends to be exclusive) could bind one to such endeavours.

There was much love, indeed, and private happiness was supplemented by public success as Pierre, who had worked for years as *chargé* (or *surchargé*) *de cours* at the Paris School of Industrial Chemistry and Physics, was at last appointed to a Professorship there and able to shift the locus of his research from a corridor to an abandoned shed. Marie was to describe the next few years as "the best and happiest of our life." Inspired by the current interest in Roentgen's discovery of X-rays, and in the new phenomenon of radioactivity discussed by Henri Becquerel, the two researchers in their "miserable shed" set out to pursue the elements involved. They found that uranium salts emitted rays similar to X-rays, and Marie found that pitchblende, which is a natural ore, lent itself even better to her quest. By 1898 first polonium then radium had been identified; within a few years, separated and purified, they were established as elements. By 1903, the Curies' work and that of Becquerel had won the Nobel Prize in Physics.

Glory came with a rush, reinforced by public interest in the medical applications of radium's radioactivity, in its possibilities for the treatment of cancer and, not least, in the novelty of an eminent scientist who was also a wife and mother. Most satisfying, however, was the cash that accompanied the prizes, which they used to improve the primitive conditions under which they laboured. Official recognition was important too: a lectureship in Physics for Marie, election to the Academy of Science and a professorship at the Sorbonne for Pierre — at last, finally, an appointment for her as Chief Assistant in his lab. Irene had been born in 1897, Eve in 1904, with no interruption to their research. And then, quite suddenly, one rainy afternoon in April 1906, on the rue Dauphine, Pierre walked into or slipped under the wheels of a horse-car to be killed. In May, Marie succeeded to his Chair in General Physics, the first woman to hold a university chair in France, as she had been the first to gain a Science doctorate, let alone to share a Nobel Prize. Her first lecture began where he had left off.

Marie's work went on, but being a scientist in her own right was not easy in a world of men. In 1911, the year she won a second Nobel Prize — her own, this time in Chemistry — she was beaten at the post in an election to the Academy of Sciences (the Academy of Medicine would elect her in 1922). That same year the press boiled over with revelations about her affair with Paul Langevin, five years her junior, once her husband's brilliant student, now at the Collège de France. The influence of her lawyer, Raymond Poincaré, the mathematician's brother, both with the courts and with the press (Poincaré happened to be

counsel of the Paris Press Association) restrained publicity; but even Poincaré could not muzzle the gutter press or the nationalist papers — *Libre Parole*, *Action française*, which seized the opportunity to attack the foreigner destroying a happy (?) French home. Eve Curie's biography speaks only of a "campaign of perfidy" and does not say what (or who) it was about. Reid is more explicit, also more to the point when he describes Marie's belief that her private relationship with Langevin could escape public notice as a disastrous miscalculation. Giroud treats the disaster as an insult — not only to genius and to private lives, but to womanhood, subject to rules men could safely ignore.

At any rate, for someone as obsessed with privacy as Marie, the crisis was traumatic, and only reinforced her nervous dislike of journalists. Only one representative of the press would ever gain her confidence, the American "Missy" Mattingley, arranger of her American trips and, in due course, of her biography, a document characteristically reticent and flat. The affair with Langevin came to a brusque end, but the friendship from which it grew lasted to her death. Like many ungracious persons, Marie made fast friends, who stood by her. In any case, after 1911, few public obstacles resisted her for long.

The war offered an opportunity for Marie's organizing ability: the stationary and mobile radiological ambulances she set up performed millions of X-rays, saving thousands of lives. The Radium Institute, long a building on the rue Pierre Curie (Marie now has her own square in the 13<sup>e</sup> *arrondissement*) surged forward after an American trip arranged by Missy Mattingley furnished the money and the radium to turn it into a universal centre for nuclear physics and chemistry.

The relation between money and research had not been immediately evident or readily accepted. For Marie's generosity involved no self-interest, and even less, and less, prestige. Disinterested work alone, Pasteur declared, could lead to progress in the theoretical field and only that, in turn, to advances in the applied field. Research meant pure research. The Curies never took out patents on their discovery of radium, which could have made them immensely wealthy; never collected any royalties. Now Marie realized that even pure research needed large funds, and that funding was more likely to follow possible industrial applications. Old friends in parliament and government — Boni, Poincaré, Herriot — better aware than most that brains are inconveniently attached to stomachs, legislated serious support for scientific research. More immediately, though, the real money, not only for the Paris enterprise but for a new Polish one bearing Marie's name, had to come from America once again. By 1932 another Radium Institute had been set up in Warsaw, with sister Bronia as its director.

In neither Institute was much attention paid to the dangers of radioactivity. Radiation could kill healthy cells as well as diseased ones; but Marie refused to admit to perils that good fresh air and exercise could not cure. Reid reports that a visiting English scientist was taught only one precaution: to change his lab-coat frequently. By the time Marie died in 1935, of leukaemia caused by radiation, a good few of her collaborators had preceded her.

Giroud's account draws heavily on the excellent biographies by Eve Curie (1938) and Robert Reid. Although easy to read, it contributes no fresh intelligence, besides the author's view of the first woman to make significant contributions to science as a heroine of the feminist cause. And certainly, looking back, one sees the problems Marie had to face, the obstacles she had to overcome, the prejudices she had to vanquish because of her sex. One wonders, however, if that is how Marie perceived her situation. In a man's world, she forged ahead, making no concessions and, really, asked for none. She won on merit, which colleagues denied no more than they would a man's. The problems that she

faced (slender resources, slow recognition, demagogic chauvinism) were faced by men as well. To her husband she was a peerless collaborator. Her fellow-scientists accepted her from the first as a competitor, and an equal or superior.

The author implies that Marie suffered a certain frustration in being forced to take second place to Pierre; and one can understand Giroud's disgust at the biographical notice of the current *Petit Larousse*, which subordinates the woman to the man and even appears to attribute her Nobel Prize to him, five years after his death. Giroud presents Pierre giving the Nobel acceptance speech in 1905 with Marie condemned to watch and listen; then quotes passages from Marie's Stockholm speech of 1911 to stress her insistence on her own achievements: me . . . me . . . me. It is interesting to compare her treatment of these occasions with that of Eve Curie, who is impressed rather with Marie's desire to praise Pierre and stress their common labour. The fact is that Marie resisted attempts to draw her into the feminist movement, and she did very well on her own; and that (as Reid concluded) "as a woman scientist she was liberated because she had created the conditions for her own liberation."

Giroud's epigraph, Paul Valéry's "je vaudrais ce que je veux", reflects the same preconception. I am not worth what I will, but what I realize of my will. I may will to play the piano, yet fail for lack of instruction and practice; or fail to write a book and fail for lack of discipline, hard work or, even, talent. However strong a will she did not bother to hide beneath her frail exterior, Marie did not will her worth, she made it. She liked to be better, even than the friends with whom she swam in Brittany, on holiday. She liked to win, even at scrabble. She was better than most; and she won. Giroud, an admirable woman, has demonstrated she does not lack for talent — or for will. In this case, however, a reader interested in the life and work of Marie Curie would do better to address himself to the work of her daughter or of Robert Reid.

*A Catalogue of European Scientific Instruments in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities of the British Museum* by F. A. B. Ward (152pp. British Museum Publications. £50. 0 7141 1345 X) is divided into two main sections: "Instruments for Time Measurement" and "Mathematical, Astronomical, Surveying and Miscellaneous Instruments".

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# The revival misrepresented

By M.E. Yapp

EDWARD W. SAID:  
Covering Islam  
186pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£8.95.  
0 7100 0840 6

Until recently popular discourse concerning the Middle East was framed in predominantly secular terms, such as strategy, economics, state power and ethnic rivalries. Quite suddenly these concepts were overshadowed by that of Islam and newspapers were full of disquisitions on the nature of that religion, its history and its possible future. No doubt a crucial event in this change of emphasis was the Iranian revolution of 1978-9, but to that dramatic episode were joined various developments in Muslim countries to produce a picture of what is commonly referred to as the revival of Islam. From the material about Islam produced by newspapers, journals, radio and television Edward Said has derived the material for this short, vigorous, but disappointing book.

The first part of *Covering Islam* is devoted to a discussion of different views of Islam and of the attitude towards Islam adopted by the media. It is not an easy section to read on account of the opacity with which Said surrounds some central questions. What, for example, is Islam? Said remarks, reasonably enough, that it is a misleading label because it obscures great differences between Muslims. Equally reasonably, he observes that it is very difficult to avoid using the term. But it is used to mean various things, with the consequence that there are several Islams, all acts of will or interpretation. Is there any reason then for preferring one view to another? If one supposes that there is somewhere a real or objective Islam the

answer is in the affirmative; different interpretations may be judged according to the degree of their correspondence with the real. But Said rejects this avenue, appearing to deny that there is a real Islam or at least that it might be useful to investigate it. Nevertheless, it is very plain that he prefers some interpretations to others and in particular dislikes that which he discerns in the media. We may return to consider his solution of this conundrum later.

Other obscurities surround Islam, however. One is to do with the geographical area he considers to be embraced by Islam. Nominally it is that area inhabited by Muslims, but since many of his statements are untrue - when applied to South and South-East Asia and Africa one must assume that he actually means the Middle East, fairly narrowly defined. Another concerns the status of his own study of Islam. Are we to regard media treatment of Islam as typical of media treatment of a large part of the world or are we to regard Islam as a special case? Both, Said writes, implausibly. Finally, darkness surrounds the question of the media's view of Islam. It is perfectly clear that many different views of Islam have been presented in the media and Said does not deny this fact. At the same time he claims that there is a central consensus, which is determined either by government policy, or by what we are and want, or possibly by the control of the commanding heights of the media by a small group (it is not clear which of these he favours).

All of these propositions surely cannot be true and one begins to wonder whether Said's method - that of subjective impression derived from reading - is really the best way to conduct a study of this sort. Perhaps, after all, there is something to be said for the laborious method of counting column inches and minutes of prime time and assigning them to some arbitrary catalogue of views of Islam.

The central part of *Covering Islam* contains a description of the United States media's treatment of the hostage crisis. Said remarks, justly, that a lot of nonsense was written about Iran during this period and points out that nearly all of the journalists sent to cover the crisis knew no Persian and very little of Iran or

Islam. They were short on hard fact and long on not always relevant comment. Although few would agree with the sharp distinction he draws between American and European coverage, most specialists would agree with Said's opinion that reporting in *Le Monde* was better than that in English-language papers. Said also notes, perceptively, that interviewers commonly asked the wrong questions, thereby leaving uncovered the more significant features of events. Anyone who has ever been interviewed as an expert on some remote corner of the world will be familiar with the situation in which questions are directed towards the international features of a crisis and away from the more important internal aspects. The interviewer's defence is that he is asking the questions to which people want answers and if the questions display ignorance, well, so do the people. Whether it is true that people want the answers to those questions seems doubtful. Possibly they just want to know what is happening and whether it will affect them.

It is not surprising that much American media comment on Iran and Islam during this period was hostile. Much more violent reactions were produced in Britain by similar situations in Kabul in 1982 and Abyssinia in 1987, and by related episodes at Lucknow in 1857-8 and Peking in 1900. Contemplating the warlike resolution of these events, what seems most remarkable is the patience and restraint with which the United States conducted itself throughout the affair and (with all its limitations) the diligence with which it sought to apprehend rationally the causes of the problem, rather than the hostility (more discriminating than Said concedes) with which it regarded those responsible. No doubt the speed with which the government of Mr. Bazarang resigned, leaving the United States with no obvious recipient of an ultimatum, and a probably unwarranted fear of what the Soviet Union might do, contributed to the caution of the United States, although some credit is still due to American indulgence. But it is altogether too much when Said suggests that the United States should not have become so agitated about the hostages in view of the fact that Iran was going through a complicated revolution at the time.

In the last part of the book Said

describes the sources of the media's view of Islam and sets out his own position in more general terms. All knowledge, claims Said, is determined by situation: the situation of the West in relation to Islam ensures that all knowledge is political and is acquired and used to serve the purpose of domination, the perpetuation of an unequal relationship. Those who write about Iran cannot evade their situation, and all he asks is that they should be conscious of it. What he objects to is what he sees as the hypocrisy of the Orientalist who, he contends, claims that his knowledge of Islam is objective. He singles out for attack Bernard Lewis for claiming that Europeans study other civilizations out of curiosity and Leonard Binder for claiming that disciplinary codes reduce the element of inevitable bias in the approach of the scholar towards another culture. The basis of European interest in other cultures, Said asserts, has always been "commercial, colonial or military expansion, empire".

*Covering Islam* is, therefore, evidently and avowedly the third and final volume treating the themes first set out in *Orientalism*. The picture of Islam displayed by the media is one originally drawn by the Orientalist, who, in the United States, is still, Said would have us believe, the tool of those interests concerned to perpetuate the unequal relationship.

This is not the place either to reopen the discussion of *Orientalism* or to examine Said's familiar intellectual position. But one major criticism of this book should be made. Said complains that he cannot understand what Binder means when he writes (admittedly a little darkly) of disciplinary codes reducing bias. Most scholars, however, would agree that one way in which the wider flights of fancy are controlled is the basic rule that statements should be in accordance with the evidence. Seemingly Said does not accept this rule. A feature of *Orientalism* was the circumstance that many of the lengthy quotations which Said produced to demonstrate so-called Orientalist attitudes simply did not bear the meaning which he ascribed to them. It was not a matter of a difference of interpretation but of straightforward misrepresentation. In the present book it is more difficult to pin the author down, since lengthy quotations are seldom given and

the sources are mainly two-year-old newspapers, tiresome, though rewarding, to check. There is a danger, therefore, that readers may assume that Said has done his homework; that he has faithfully represented what the media actually said about Islam; and that further debate may proceed from that position. Such an assumption would be most unwise.

Two examples must suffice to illustrate Said's cavalier approach to evidence in *Covering Islam*. On page 109 there is a quotation from an editorial by Ernest Conine in the *Los Angeles Times* (December 10, 1979). The interpretation which follows is a complete distortion of what Conine wrote. To select one passage - Conine wrote: "... the Shah is hated not just because his police tortured people but also because he took away government subsidies from Moslem holy men". Said comments: "Conine assumes, without any warrant except ethnocentric bias, that Iranians were less troubled by torture than by the insult to their holy men". The concept of the relative importance of the Shah's offences is imported solely by Said. What would he say to one of his students who perpetrated so elementary an error in a comprehension test? The second example is taken from the preceding page. Referring to an article by Edmund Bosworth in the *Los Angeles Times* of December 12, 1979, Said claims that Bosworth supports the "theory that all [Said's emphasis] political activity for a period of almost twelve hundred years in an area that includes Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, Spain and India can be understood as emanating from the Muslim call for jihad". The casual reader is left to take this statement on trust. As I write, however, I have before me a copy of this article (entitled "Will Iran launch a Holy War?") which was first published in *Newsday* on December 2, 1979. It is a discussion of the role of the *jihad* in recent Muslim history and concludes that it is unlikely that a general Muslim *jihad* would be directed against the West. There is absolutely nothing whatsoever in it to justify the statement about "all political activity etc". If this is a fair sample of Said's standards of interpretation one is not surprised that he should be so hostile to the idea of objective knowledge.

absorbing interest for Chinese studies is to see spelt out by experts the precise nature of the medical conditions which may result from the stressful aspects of Chinese social institutions. For example, the daughter-in-law's situation in the traditional family is a special source of culturally engendered stress which has yielded high rates of psychological problems and suicide among young married women.

Indeed Andrew Hsieh and Jonathan Spence conclude that for long periods of China's pre-modern history suicide was not regarded as deviant. The ancient source-book for praiseworthy female suicide is the *Lieh-ni chuan* (Biographies of Women), which gives examples of women preferring death to the infringement of one of the most trivial rules of propriety. One of these heroines even perished in the flames because there was no chaperone to escort her from her burning home. Such were the examples of chastity set before women in traditional China.

For those whose interest is in less bizarre and more central manifestations of Chinese culture there is an important contribution by James McGough on deviant marriage patterns in Chinese society - everything from the practice of adopting young girls as prospective brides, polyandry, levirate, sororate, "spirit marriage" (ie, to the ghost of a dead betrothed), to "same-sex" unions. He concludes that we are introducing our own prejudices in thinking of "normal" and "deviant". These various marriage patterns result from the overriding need to recruit into the family group productive members, to which end the slow and unreliable processes of sex and reproduction are only one route.

a disgrace, which is mitigated if it is believed that the sufferer has physical rather than mental disorders, view of the belief in the moral causes of mental illness, the cure is naturally sought in moral exhortation, a tradition which survived in the People's Republic in the form of group therapy through the study of Mao Tse-tung's thought.

Further evidence for the tenacity of Chinese culture is to be found in an interesting essay by Eng-seong Tan on culture-bound syndromes among overseas Chinese, including *koro*, the phobia that the penis is retracting into the body and that the patient will die when it finally does so; this phobia has been traced back to the tenth century in China and, somewhat implausibly, attributed to the prominence of castration as a punishment in that country.

The family institution is also very important in the lives of the mentally ill (as shown by Tung-yi Lin and Mei-chen Lin). Because mental illnesses are regarded as punishment for violating Confucian norms, such as filial piety, these problems, like so many others in Chinese society, tend to be coped with inside the family rather than by outside agencies. This means that medical authorities may misdiagnose the incidence of mental illness in Chinese communities. This tendency is accentuated by the fact that the family sees mental illness as

an exhibition that calls itself *Prussia: Striking a Balance* (what the title really means is "Prussia: Good and Bad"), but the organizers have sensibly avoided adjectives, and have tried desperately hard to avoid giving offence. Still, qualifications at once spring to mind. Auschwitz was largely thought up by South Germans, and operated often enough by Ukrainians. East Germany was created by foreigners, and is worked by Saxons - pastiche Prussians. The models for East Berlin were firstly Moscow and "Friedrichstadt" today testifies (what is left of it). Unter den Linden was well-planned, to give a *glänzende Perspektive*, copied from, and maybe outdoing, the *Prospekt* parts of Catherine's Petersburg. However, in the nineteenth century a hand of unrelieved ponderousness fell on Berlin. The damage it has done has been excellently described by Wolf Jobst Siedler in one of the five paperback volumes that accompany this exhibition. 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## commentary

### Grey beard and glittering eye

By K. Z. Cieszkowski

Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881  
National Portrait Gallery

Whereas the large centenary exhibition at the National Library of Scotland set out to document Carlyle's life and writings, with a wealth of manuscripts and letters and other documents from the Library's own holdings and elsewhere, the smaller display at the National Portrait Gallery in London concentrates solely on portraiture. Any ancillary documentation (a small selection of books and letters, in particular illustrating Carlyle's relationship with the NPG - a medallion-portrait of Carlyle appears on the facade of the Gallery, above the entrance) is offered rather as an afterthought. What is important is the image of the man - a portraitist's dream.

The early, beardless Carlyle was delineated by John Linnell (an impressively romantic portrait dating from 1843-4) and Samuel Laurence - the fine portrait by Laurence is in a private collection, but is reproduced on the cover of the Edinburgh catalogue. The outstanding feature of Carlyle's face at this time was the tight-lipped mouth, the lower lip thrust forward sharply to give him a firm and intransigent expression. Carlyle's beard, once grown for the most curious of reasons - as an expression of solidarity with the sol-

diers then fighting in the Crimea), ranks high in the league-table of Eminent Victorian Beards - alongside the beards of Meredith and the young Hardy, above those of Browning and Darwin, but a shade below those of Bagehot and Tennyson. Carlyle's face reverted in middle age to that of the Lowlands peasant, with something of the Old Testament prophet thrown in - the hair wild and unkempt and unruly, the beard thick and greying from the extremities. The eyes took over from the mouth as the most expressive feature of his face, the usual expression being one of intense melancholy and tragic gloom - a visual expression of what the letters make plain.

As regards the later portraits, it is impossible to do more than just speculate on who got it right - Carlyle's own judgement cannot be relied on too much, as he was notoriously erratic in his valuation in pictorial matters. Of the five major later portraits (Watts, Whistler, Millais, Robert Herdman and Boehm), Carlyle preferred Herdman's (on loan from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery) and hated Watts's (the second version of three is on display). In the case of the famous Whistler picture, Carlyle thought the artist had done a portrait of his features. Whistler's painting (originally 'Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2' - not a very flattering title from sitter's point of view) shows a profoundly sad and tired man, adds the nuances to this simplification.

finest images of Carlyle that have come down to us. Millais's portrait is the most eloquent in its presentation of the man, bearing as it does a great sense of dignity and solid grandeur. The gloom is replaced by an intellectual vitality, and the sitter looks out with an expression of challenge and combativeness - the face is moulded in thick broad strokes, but the hands have been left unfinished, only lightly sketched in, clasping the head of a walking cane. In Helen Allingham's small watercolour, Carlyle seems dominated by his surroundings - furniture, portraits of Cromwell and Luther, etc.

The photographs fix the features sufficiently to suggest that Watts's portrait failed to achieve a likeness, and one of the Julia Margaret Cameron photographs (from the Herschel album - the craggy face emerging from darkness, invested with great mystery and a deep silence) is one of the most powerful images of Carlyle, and certainly the finest of her photographs.

In addition to portraits of Carlyle, there is a small gallery of portraits of Carlyle's heroes - Dante, Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Luther, Napoleon, Samuel Johnson, Burns - but no Robert Peel, in fact no contemporary heroes at all. The display takes its cue from the *On Heroes* lectures, and could be accused of grossly simplifying Carlyle's ideas by transforming them into simple hero-worship. However, the catalogue adds the nuances to this simplification.



An 1875 aquatint of Carlyle by an unknown artist, from the exhibition reviewed here.

### Plumbing the shallows

By David Profumo

The Beastly Beattitudes of  
Balthazar B.  
Duke of York's Theatre

J. P. Donleavy's association with the theatre has not always been fortunate, but this has characteristically not deterred him from presenting a stage adaptation of yet another of his novels, the richly comic *Balthazar B.* Unfortunately the task of funneling such an episodic book into a coherent play results in an untidy script in spite of the comic strength of much of its dialogue. The first quarter of the novel, which deals beautifully with Balthazar's childhood, is excluded and the play opens in his student chambers in post-war Dublin, where he leads a lonely, elegant life away from his native France, engaged in the joint pursuits of Natural Sciences and the lovely Elizabeth Fitzdare, only to have his university career terminated after a sexual imbroglio organized by his old schoolfriend, the ebullient Beffy. After these adolescent shenanigans, the play disintegrates into a number of scenes set in and around London, illustrating Balthazar's eventual and unhappy marriage, and Beffy's mind-boggling sexual pursuits.

There are two major faults with this design. Firstly, the character of Balthazar is given very little scope for development, since the imaginative life which the novel affords him through its blend of first- and third-person narration is reduced to a few unsatisfactory reveries during the disruptive scene-changes. Despite the ideal stage-presence as Balthazar, therefore, Patrick Ryecart has little verbal communication with, and combat the disarmingly obscene personalities of the beatty Beffy, played by Simon Patterson.

from its central figure and becomes a vehicle for the beastly beattitudes of Beffy. Instead, his compulsive search for sin and his amazing professional misfortunes establish him as a personality of more interest than his diffident friend, and Simon Callow whisks through the part like a man possessed.

As Fitzdare, Susan Gilmore has to contend with the second problem, for her appearance is confined to the first part, yet her presence as the girl of Balthazar's fantasies must haunt the rest of the play. She is certainly alluring, but the tantalizing shyness of their courtship is sadly compressed into two scenes. This important sentimental axis to the plot fails to survive the second part, where Ron Daniels's direction gives undue prominence to a series of cameo episodes which bewilder the audience as much as the hero. The emphasis is on scenes of sexual titillation and farce during which Balthazar struggles to keep in mind the memory of his former love, while participating fully in a number of romps: we see him emerge naked from his amours to confront a posse of voyeuristic neighbours, attend a live striptease show with Beffy, and attempt to seduce Alphonsine, played by Lizzie Romilly as an ooh-la-la sex pair, who addresses the French-born Balthazar in a thick Parisian accent. Amid such a mêlée of encounters the adoration of Fitzdare necessarily loses credibility, and the pathos of the conclusion evaporates.

For addicts of Donleavy, this makes an infuriating evening; though the theatrical realization of Beffy as a lively libertine is a comic triumph, and Sue Forman's costume designs honour the book's constant sartorial details, the play itself lacks focus. Characters are introduced and then dropped with little continuity, and while this does allow some splendid performances en passant (particularly

### Lands and languages

By Paul Muldoon

Three Sisters  
Grand Opera House, Belfast

This is the second production from the Field Day Theatre Company, established last year by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea with a view to bringing drama to towns throughout Ireland. *Three Sisters* opened in Derry's Guild Hall, itself the setting for Friel's play *The Freedom of the City*, and has been packing them in in Belfast's Grand Opera House, various centres throughout Ulster and more recently in the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival.

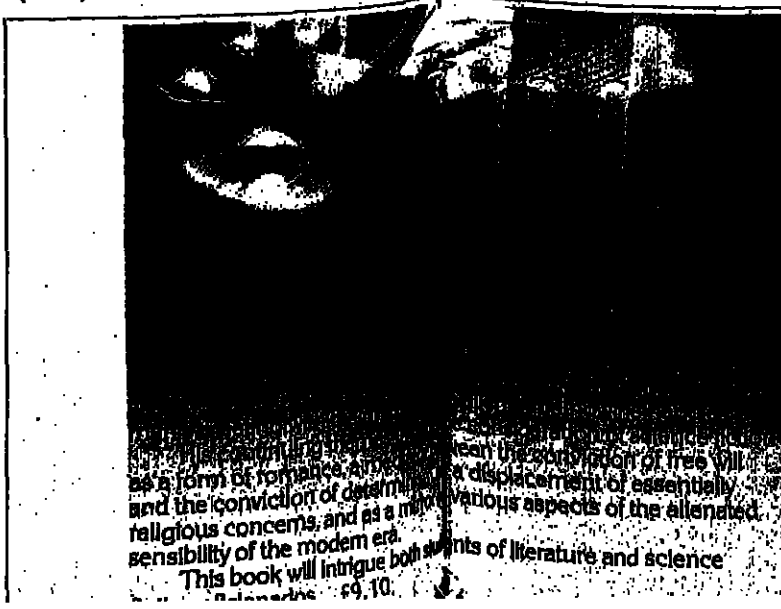
Field Day's first production was of Brian Friel's *Translations*, arguably the single most important piece of writing to come out of Ireland in the last ten years. I can think of no contemporary Irish writer who has so boldly and delicately explored the complexities of the Irish mind, or displayed such an understanding of the relationship between land and language. In his previous play, *Arcturion*, Friel demonstrated a Chekhovian ability to allow the "piddling little things" of day-to-day life to illuminate much larger issues. His technical facility is such that he can convince his audience that most of the characters in *Translations* are communicating through the medium of Irish, whereas they are in reality speaking English. He now brings his gifts to bear on a reworking of *Three Sisters*.

This is neither a direct translation from the Russian, nor a revamping of the basic scenario on the lines of Thomas Kilroy's *The Seagull*, set in nineteenth-century Galway. Friel's procedure here has been to plot a course among the various translat-

"that's a wild big crowd", "as thick as poundies" - which seems incongruous, there's nothing remarkably "Irish", nothing obviously provincial.

The direction by Stephen Rea is unobtrusive, and the performances are by and large self-effacing. Sorcha Cusack and Eileen Pollock are strong as Olga and Masha. I wasn't quite so convinced by Owen Fournier's rather unsympathetic Irina, nor by James Ellie's exaggeratedly swaggering Vershinin. Nuala Hayes makes a marvellously scatter-brained Natasha, while Niall Buggy and Eamon Kelly are excellent as Tusenbach and Chebutykin. John Quinlan's account of Andrey Prozorov is never entirely credible, but Michael Duffy presents a masterful cameo as Forepont.

*Three Sisters* can be seen at Portadown (Oct 6), Coleraine (7-10), Galway (12-14), Cork (15-17), Tralee (19-21) and Limerick (22-24).



This book will intrigue both the literary and the scientific.

## commentary

### Action and acting...

By Ray Ockenden

Mephisto  
Round House Theatre

Ariane Mnouchkine's play, given in Barry Russell's translation, is based on an uneven novel of 1936 by Klaus Mann. The fact that this *roman à clef* is currently a best-seller in Germany is due less to its inherent merits than to its status as a banned book: its central character, Höfgen, was so transparently based on the career of the actor Gustav Gründgens that it provoked numerous lawsuits. Mnouchkine, while also contributing to the novel's fame, takes a wider perspective on Weimar Germany. Alongside Höfgen's evolution from communist sympathizer to idol of the Nazi establishment she brings out the differing responses to political events of other figures who are associated with a Hamburg theatre and its offshoot, a radical cabaret. Mann himself, under a different name, is a character in the play who moves uncertainly from being an epitome of bourgeois *jeunesse dorée* to an anti-fascist stance; meanwhile a young Nazi actor rebels when he discovers that his party, having appeared to espouse the workers' cause, betrays them once it gains power.

The play is not just another Cabaret; it is a direct statement about the simple and difficult issues of choice and commitment, attitudes and action. Above all, it is a play about theatre and the problem of its relationship to life. From the decadence of a Klaus Mann play, an extract from which is acted out with arch sensuality, we move to the harshness of revolutionary cabaret, with its Chaplinesque mime of Hitler and satire on political realities. After the wistful scene in which Thomas Mann and his family, hosts to the playwright Sternheim, recite from memory the closing lines of *The Cherry Orchard*, we see Höfgen playing Goethe's Mephisto in a glittering gala performance attended by Goering.

Both the disillusioned Nazi and those who compromise with Hitler insist that they are merely actors. On the other hand, the radically engaged actors are constantly troubled by their sense of impotence to effect change in the real world, and can also be blind to actual dangers. Should they bother to take Hitler seriously, the cabaret artists wonder? When the Jewish actress opts on political grounds for exile in Russia rather than America, we know she is going to her death as surely as those who continue their communist cabaret while the Nazis take power. No easy answers are offered to the questions about art and reality which the play poses.

The two halves of the performance are effectively contrasted. The first seems to hover, as if uncertain of its aim; in the second, its disparate elements are suddenly focused by the Nazi take-over, and the need for choice. Individual scenes are tellingly related. The cabaret sketch

(borrowed from Erika Mann) which satirizes anti-semitic propaganda by diagnosing the telephone as the root of all evils in the state, is echoed in a later scene when the bourgeois characters, no longer secure in their elegant surroundings, recoil from the telephone as they realize how, in a totalitarian state, it is a means for authority to monitor their conversations.

The stage is dominated by a large gantry, which in the second part becomes a railway-bridge, a meeting-place for the outcasts and opponents of the new régime. The play's most moving scene is enacted here: the last conversation of a couple (she Jewish, he loyal to her) before they jump to their death. Beneath the trains pass: expresses to Berlin and fame for the opportunist Höfgen, cattle-trucks to the labour and concentration camps.

Gordon McDougall's taut direction and the versatility of the talented Oxford Playhouse Company carry off short scenes, the brisk transitions. Shedding the sometimes ungrateful Klaus Mann role, Clive Wood turns into a comic and chilling Hitler. From the band which plays Terry Mortimer's music (the Weill pastiches are appropriate and skilful) there emerge the cabaret communists (David Cardy and the excellent Neil Phillips). The inseparable bright young things (Alyson Spiro and Laura Davenport), after play-acting convent lesbians, find themselves living out political roles at opposite ends of the spectrum. As Höfgen, Ian McDiarmid is called upon to

suggest the brittleness of the turn-of-coat Klaus Mann attacked, rather than the complexities of the real-life Gründgens. His increasing stylization of accent and gesture illustrates how Höfgen rises to fame by preferring acting to action: his rhetoric becomes grander and hollower as he passively allows events to carry him along.

The end of the play sets a nagging question-mark over Klaus Mann's position (and with it his father's; perhaps Brecht's too). Can one work against evil from a safe distance? Paradoxically, it is Höfgen who asserts that the real front line is in Germany itself; but there the only choice is between ugly death, suicide and compromise. Theatre, too, is a kind of safe distance. The silence of the audience which greeted the play's mute epilogue (placed as it is on the stage, commemorating writers who were victims of totalitarianism) was more eloquent comment than the awkward applause which eventually followed. Once again, questions about theatre were being posed, this time in the auditorium itself.

With its size and shape, The Round House leads itself less well to the Company's style than the Oxford Playhouse did, diffusing some of the intensity of earlier performances; but the evening remains a moving and challenging experience. If the empty seats in the house suggest the relative unpopularity of political theatre, the play continues to remind audiences (and actors) that we may prefer an exclusive diet of "pure" theatre at our peril.

### ... and action and thought

By Alan Jenkins

Good  
Warehouse Theatre

A musical about the Third Reich?  
The Night of the Broken Glass,  
"euthanasia" and Auschwitz, with songs?

The misgivings went on as the lights went down. Had the RSC experienced a collective brainstorm? Or, on the contrary, had they perpetrated a masterly insurance fraud à la Bialystok and Bloom in *The Producers*? In fact C. P. Taylor's new play is more *Cabaret* than *Springtime for Hitler*, and more Brecht than Adorf (as does Chaplin's Dictator) but the resalable rise is observed through the other end of the telescope, so to speak, from just outside the charmed circle of power, and with a conspicuously innocent eye.

The eye belongs to Halder, a university professor of literature, a thoughtful, lustful, ambitious and costly domestic creature whose career becomes entangled with that of the SS and follows a similar curve towards the pit of cruelty - a process which baffles only its protagonist.

Halder suffers guilt for having half-abandoned his gentle mother to an institution. His marriage to a charming, child-like but slutish musician is going tepid. He takes his anger and his sexual problems to the Jewish psychiatrist (analyst?) Maurice, whose slowly-dawning fears of Armageddon he blithely dismisses. Maurice equally blithely assures his friend that all his problems can be put down to what he calls (there is no hint of clinical understanding in Joe Moll's performance, though this is partly the fault of the script) the "neurosis". Halder's affair with a beautiful young student is fuelled by a few private tutorials on the "relevance" of *Faust*. And his writings - particularly on the problem of the old, infirm "useless" - have attracted interest in powerful quarters: from the study of Goethe he falls into the arms of Goering and Goebbels. He is soon part of the propaganda machine, lending his clear-headed human sympathies (exercised initially on his mother) to the programme for "euthanasia". Sexual prowess returns for Anne's benefit, but what he has been repressing returns with it; a hint of a *Faust* parallel suggests itself, as Halder regains the world at the cost of his soul.

There are two linking, glaringly ironic strands. One is that he is unaware of what is happening to him until the symptoms are manifested in obsessive wringing of hands, facial twitching and the rest. The other derives from the more innocent fantasy which reveals a "neurosis" from the beginning: at moments of crisis Halder hears a band playing in his head - all kinds of band, all kinds of music; which, psychologically "accept-

where he has been sent to inspect and report on conditions, he hears the prisoners' band strike up - so successfully has he managed his screening-out of the horror in which he has unwittingly or half-wittingly played his part - is as nothing to this overwhelming occurrence: it is a real band. He is "cured" at precisely the moment when he is effectively damned.

There are other ironies, all of them grim, all of them familiar. We have heard and seen a good deal about the process by which the appalling becomes thinkable, then acceptable, and gradually inevitable. But there are too many real horrors dealt out by this play for any reviewer to be able to yield to knowings for long. C. P. Taylor is, anyway, less interested in stirring pity for the sufferers and victims than in provoking reflection on the monsters and torturers. His play sets out to be thoroughly didactic. For the grimest irony is how an intelligent, though innocent, bemused and apparently ineffectual man like Halder succumbs with something approaching gratitude to the gruesome distortion of his works and aims which is effected by the SS to further their own. Such collusion may spring from deeply buried psychological sources, and a few are canvassed: the overriding need for love and acceptance, the talismanic virtue of a uniform and so on. But Taylor implies that the real causes are ignorance, blindness, self-delusion, a fatal misreading of historical reality and a failure to grasp the sub-plot of history, the meaning of directions taken by events. Inflation, growing militarism, the deadly words of Hitler, all the sinister stage-management of a circus whose public theatre provided the spectacle of beating, burning, looting and killing - all this was obvious enough, so how is it that Halder can rationalize it as something not to be taken seriously? And how, when the full

asked, it is not answered in any coherent way. Halder readily believes Anne - the student for whom he has deserted his wife - when she insists "We are good people. Good people". Of course: such people as they in fact are seldom believe otherwise. The point is easily scored, but are we to adduce from Taylor's having scored it that he regards the civilized, "humane" intellectual's political innocence as automatically self-aggrandizing, hypocritical, contemptible? There is no "good" in any of the characters in his play, though all invoke extenuating circumstances in their favour; the problem, dramatically, is that this moral ambivalence precipitates a circularity, and a profound ambiguity, in the play itself. In such historical circumstances as Halder's, "good" is not a matter of conscience, of scruple and dwelling on the event: it is shown only in action. Acting as Halder does, a man automatically forfeits his claim to be "good". This is clear enough, but it is easy to feel that Taylor has, by the simple expedient of his title, added the semblance of a problematical moral dimension to what is a very different and, given the immensity of the crime, a more superficial argument.

The play moves fast, and its collage of songs and speech, of pathos and crude irony or mockery - not far from the caricature of political cabaret - its rapid alternation between scenes, between Halder's fantasy world and the world of increasing violence, SS men and sexual bias, are all deftly managed. Alan Howard is - despite some overworking of the face to suggest pained incomprehension or blank bewilderment - brilliant and compelling, particularly in the closing scenes of horrific self-awareness: Joe Moll struggles with an impoverished role, but his is a wasted opportunity. More important, surely, than these details of entertainment-value is not just the residual sense of triviality which surrounds such a project when

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## commentary

### Grey beard and glittering eye

By K. Z. Cieszkowski

Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881  
National Portrait Gallery

Whereas the large centenary exhibition at the National Library of Scotland set out to document Carlyle's life and writings, with a wealth of manuscripts and letters and other documents from the Library's own holdings and elsewhere, the smaller display at the National Portrait Gallery in London concentrates solely on portraiture. Any ancillary documentation (a small selection of books and letters, in particular illustrating Carlyle's relationship with the NPG - a medallion portrait of Carlyle appears on the facade of the Gallery, above the entrance) is offered rather as an afterthought. What is important is the image of the man - a portraitist's dream.

The early, beardless Carlyle was delineated by John Linnell (an impossibly romantic portrait dating from 1843-4) and Samuel Laurence - the fine portrait by Laurence is in a private collection, but is reproduced on the cover of the Edinburgh catalogue. The outstanding feature of Carlyle's face at this time was the tight-lipped mouth, the lower lip thrust forward sharply to give him a firm and intransigent expression. Carlyle's beard, once grown (for the most curious of reasons - as an expression of solidarity with the sol-

diers then fighting in the Crimea), ranks high in the league-table of Eminent Victorian Beards - alongside the beards of Meredith and the young Hardy, above those of Browning and Darwin, but a shade below those of Bagehot and Tennyson. Carlyle's face reverted in middle age to that of the Lowlands peasant, with something of the Old Testament prophet thrown in - the hair wildly unkempt and unruly, the beard thick and greying from the extremities. The eyes took over from the mouth as the most expressive feature of his face, the usual expression being one of intense melancholy and tragic gloom - a visual expression of what the letters make plain.

As regards the later portraits, it is impossible to do more than just speculate on who got it right - Carlyle's own judgement cannot be relied on too much, as he was notoriously erratic in his valuation in pictorial matters. Of the five major later portraits (Watts, Whistler, Millais, Robert Herdman and Boehm), Carlyle preferred Herdman's (on loan from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery) and hated Watts's (the second version of three is on display). In the case of the famous Whistler picture, Carlyle thought the artist had done a portrait of his clothes rather than of his features. Whistler's painting (originally 'Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2' - not a very flattering title from sitter's point of view) shows a profoundly sad and tired man, the expression vacant and melancholy in the extreme - but it is one of the

finest images of Carlyle that have come down to us. Millais's portrait is the most eloquent in its presentation of the man, bearing as it does a great sense of dignity and solid grandeur. The gloom is replaced by an intellectual vitality, and the sitter looks out with an expression of challenge and combativeness - the face is moulded in thick broad strokes, but the hands have been left unfinished, only lightly sketched in, clasping the end of a walking cane. In Helen Allingham's small watercolour, Carlyle seems dominated by his surroundings - furniture, portraits of Cromwell and Luther, etc.

The photographs fix the features sufficiently to suggest that Watts's portrait failed to achieve a likeness, and one of the Julia Margaret Cameron photographs (from the Herschel album - the craggy face emerging from darkness, invested with great mystery and a deep silence) is one of the most powerful images of Carlyle, and certainly the finest of her photographs.

In addition to portraits of Carlyle, there is a small gallery of portraits of Carlyle's heroes - Dante, Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Luther, Napoleon, Samuel Johnson, Burns - but no Robert Peel, in fact no contemporary heroes at all. The display takes its cue from the *On Heroes* lectures, and could be accused of grossly simplifying Carlyle's ideas by transforming them into simple hero-worship. However, the catalogue adds the nuances to this simplification.



An 1875 aquatint of Carlyle by an unknown artist, from the exhibition reviewed here.

### Plumbing the shallows

By David Profumo

The Beastly Beattitudes of  
Balthazar B.  
Duke of York's Theatre

J. P. Donleavy's association with the theatre has not always been fortunate, but this has characteristically not deterred him from presenting a stage adaptation of yet another of his novels, the richly comic *Balthazar B.* Unfortunately the task of funnelling such an episodic book into a coherent play results in an untidy script in spite of the comic strength of much of its dialogue. The first quarter of the novel, which deals beautifully with Balthazar's childhood, his excluded and the play opens in his student chambers in post-war Dublin, where he leads a lonely, elegant life away from his native France, engaged in the joint pursuits of Natural Sciences and the lovely Elizabeth Fitzdare, only to have his university career terminated after a sexual imbroglio organized by his old schoolfriend, the ebullient Beffy. After these adolescent shenanigans, the play disintegrates into a number of scenes set in and around London, illustrating Balthazar's eventual and unhappy marriage, and Beffy's mind-boggling sexual pursuits.

There are two major faults with this design. Firstly, the character of Balthazar is given very little scope for development, since the imaginative life which the novel affords him through its blend of first- and third-person narration is reduced to a few unsatisfactory reveries during the disruptive scene-changes. Despite his ideal stage-presence as Balthazar, therefore, Patrick Ryecart has little verbal ammunition with which to combat the disarmingly obscene performance of the beauteous Beffy, played by Simon Callow. As the kaleidoscopic, gospel according to Beffy unfolds, plumbing the shallows of sexual deviation ('the prick is the palate of the soul'), the play increasingly directs attention away

from its central figure and becomes a vehicle for the beastly beattitudes of Beffy, instead; his compulsive search for sin and his amazing professional misfortunes establish him as a personality of more interest than his diffident friend, and Simon Callow whisks through the part like a man possessed.

As Fitzdare, Susan Gilmore has to contend with the second problem, for her appearance is confined to the first part, yet her presence as the girl of Balthazar's fantasies must haunt the rest of the play. She is certainly alluring, but the tantalizing shyness of their courtship is sadly compressed into two scenes. This important sentimental axis to the plot fails to survive the second part, where Ron Daniels's direction gives undue prominence to a series of cameo episodes which bewilder the audience as much as the hero. The emphasis is on scenes of sexual titillation and farce during which Balthazar struggles to keep in mind the memory of his former love, while participating fully in a number of romps: we see him emerge naked from his amours to confront a posse of voyeuristic neighbours, attend a live striptease show with Beffy, and attempt to seduce Alphonsine, played by Lizzy Romilly as an oct-uple au pair, who addresses the French-born Balthazar in a thick Parisian accent. Amid such a melée of encounters the adoration of Fitzdare necessarily loses credibility, and the pathos of the conclusion evaporates.

For addicts of Donleavy, this makes an infuriating evening, though the theatrical realization of Beffy as a lively libertine is a comic triumph, and Sue Formston's costume designs honour the book's constant sartorial details: the play itself lacks focus. Characters are introduced and then dropped, with little continuity, and while this does allow some splendid performances en passant (particularly Sylvia Colledge's indignant Lady Beauséjour, and Noel Howlett's doddering Beffy), the overall shape resembles a series of revue sketches, but ultimately incon-

### Lands and languages

By Paul Muldoon

Three Sisters  
Grand Opera House, Belfast

This is the second production from the Field Day Theatre Company, established last year by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea with a view to bringing drama to towns throughout Ireland. *Three Sisters* opened in Derry's Guild Hall, itself the setting for Friel's play *The Freedom of the City*, and has been packing them in at Belfast's Grand Opera House, various centres throughout Ulster and more recently in the Galety Theatre, Dublin, as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival.

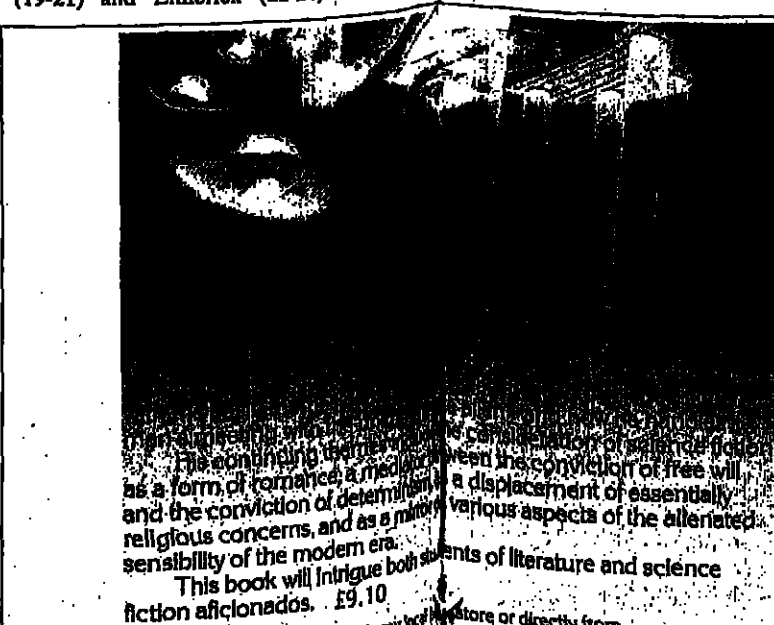
Field Day's first production was of Brian Friel's *Translations*, arguably the single most important piece of writing to come out of Ireland in the last ten years. I can think of no contemporary Irish writer who has so boldly and delicately explored the complexities of the Irish mind, or displayed such an understanding of the relationship between land and language. In his previous play, *Aristocrats*, Friel demonstrated a Chekhovian ability to allow the "piddling little things" of day-to-day life to illuminate much larger issues. His technical facility is such that he can convince his audience that most of the characters in *Translations* are communicating through the medium of Irish, whereas they are in reality speaking English. He now brings his gifts to bear on a reworking of *Three Sisters*.

This is neither a direct translation from the Russian, nor a reworking of the basic scenario on the lines of Thomas Kilroy's *The Seagull*, set in nineteenth-century Galway. Friel's procedure here has been to plot a course among the various translations available in English, and to offer his own re-reading of them. His rendering is fluent and serviceable, allowing the universal qualities of the play to shine through. Apart from the occasional idiomatic phrase -

"that's a wild big crowd", "as thick as poundies" - which seems incongruous, there's nothing remarkably 'Irish', nothing obviously provincial.

The direction by Stephen Rea is unobtrusive, and the performances are by and large self-effacing. Sorcha Cusack and Eileen Pollock are strong as Olga and Masha. I wasn't quite so convinced by Olwen Fouere's rather unsympathetic Irina, nor by James Ellis's exaggeratedly swaggering Vershinin. Nuala Hayes makes a marvellously scatter-brained Natasha, while Niall Buggy and Eamon Kelly are excellent as Tson-bach and Chebutykin. John Quinlan's account of Andrey Prozorov is never entirely credible, but Michael Duffy presents a masterful cameo as Fers-

*Three Sisters* can be seen at Portadown (Oct 6), Coleraine (7-10), Galway (12-14), Cork (15-17), Tralee (19-21) and Limerick (22-24).



This book will intrigue both students of literature and science. Available at your local bookstore or directly from Harvard University Press, 126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1 9SD.

### Action and acting...

By Ray Ockenden

Mephisto  
Round House Theatre

Ariane Mnouchkine's play, given in Barry Russell's translation, is based on an uneven novel of 1936 by Klaus Mann. The fact that this *roman à clef* is currently a best-seller in Germany is due less to its inherent merits than to its status as a banned book: its central character, Höfgen, was so transparently based on the career of the actor Gustav Gründgens that it provoked numerous lawsuits. Mnouchkine, while also contributing to the novel's fame, takes a wider perspective on Weimar Germany. Alongside Höfgen's evolution from communist sympathizer to idol of the Nazi establishment she brings out the differing responses to political events of other figures who are associated with a Hamburg theatre and its offshoot, a radical cabaret. Mann himself, under a different name, is a character in the play who moves uncertainly from being an epitome of bourgeois *jeunesse dorée* to an anti-fascist stance; meanwhile a young Nazi actor rebels when he discovers that his father, having appeared to espouse the workers' cause, betrays them once it gains power.

The play is not just another cabaret: it is a direct statement about the simple and difficult issues of choice and commitment, attitudes and action. Above all, it is a play

about theatre and the problem of its relationship to life. From the decadence of a Klaus Mann play, an extract from which is acted out with arch sensuality, we move to the harshness of revolutionary cabaret, with its Chaplinesque mime of Hitler and satire on political realities. After the wistful scene in which Thomas Mann and his family, hosts to the playwright Sternheim, recite from memory the closing lines of *The Cherry Orchard*, we see Höfgen playing Goethe's Mephisto in a glittering gala performance attended by Goering.

Both the disillusioned Nazi and those who compromise with Hitler insist that they are merely actors. On the other hand, the radically engaged actors are constantly troubled by their sense of impotence to effect change in the real world, and can also be blind to actual dangers. Should they bother to take Hitler seriously, the cabaret artists wonder? When the Jewish actress opts on political grounds for exile in Russia rather than America, we know she is going to her death as surely as those who continue their communist cabaret while the Nazis take power. No easy answers are offered to the questions about art and reality which the play poses.

The two halves of the performance are effectively contrasted. The first seems to hover, as if uncertain of its aim; in the second, its disparate elements are suddenly focused by the Nazi take-over, and the need for choice. Individual scenes are tellingly related. The cabaret sketch

(borrowed from Erik Mann) which satirizes anti-semitic propaganda by diagnosing the telephone as the root of all evils in the state, is echoed in a later scene when the bourgeois characters, no longer secure in their elegant surroundings, recoil from the telephone as they realize how, in a totalitarian state, it is a means for authority to monitor their conversations.

The stage is dominated by a large gantry, which in the second part becomes a railway-bridge, a meeting-place for the outcasts and opponents of the new régime. The play's most moving scene is enacted here: the last conversation of a couple (she Jewish, he loyal to her) before they jump to their death. Beneath, the trains pass: expresses to Berlin and fame for the opportunist Höfgen, cattle-trucks to the labour and concentration camps.

Gordon McDougall's taut direction and the versatility of the talented Oxford Playhouse Company carry off short scenes, the stark transitions. Shedding the sometimes ungrateful Klaus Mann role, Clive Wood turns into a comic and chilling Hitler. From the band which plays Terry Mortimer's music (the Weill pastiches are appropriate and skilful) there emerge the cabaret communists (David Cardy and the excellent Neil Phillips). The inseparable bright young things (Alyson Spiro and Laura Davenport), after play-acting convent lesbians, find themselves living out political roles at opposite ends of the spectrum. As Höfgen, Ian McDiarmid is called upon to

suggest the brittleness of the turn-of-century Manns attacked, rather than the complexities of the real-life Gründgens. His increasing stylization of accent and gesture illustrates how Höfgen rises to fame by preferring acting to action: his rhetoric becomes grander and hollower as he passively allows events to carry him along.

The end of the play sets a nagging question-mark over Klaus Mann's position (and with it his father's; perhaps Brecht's too). Can one work against evil from a safe distance? Paradoxically, it is Höfgen who asserts that the real front line is in Germany itself; but there the only choice is between ugly death, suicide and compromise. Theatre, too, is a kind of safe distance. The silence of the audience which greeted the play's anticlimactic placards are mounted on the stage, commercializing writers who were victims of totalitarianism was more eloquent comment than the awkward applause which eventually followed. Once again, questions about theatre were being posed, this time in the auditorium itself.

With its size and shape, The Round House lends itself less well to the Company's style than the Oxford Playhouse did, diffusing some of the intensity of earlier performances; but the evening remains a moving and challenging experience. If the empty seats in the house suggested the relative unpopularity of political theatre, the play continues to remind audiences (and actors) that we may prefer an exclusive diet of "pure" theatre at our peril.

### ... and action and thought

By Alan Jenkins

Good  
Warehouse Theatre

A musical about the Third Reich? The Night of the Broken Glass, "euthanasia" and Auschwitz, with songs?

The misgivings went on as the lights went down. Had the RSC experienced a collective brainstorm? Or, on the contrary, had they perpetrated a masterly insurance fraud *à la* Blaystock and Bloom in *The Producers*? In fact C. P. Taylor's new play is more *Cabaret* than *Springtime for Hitler*, and more Brecht than either. Arturo Ui looms behind this Adolf (as does Chaplin's Dictator), but the restorable rise is observed through the other end of the telescope, so to speak, from just outside the charmed circle of power, and with a conspicuously innocent eye.

The eye belongs to Halder, a university professor of literature, a thoughtful, lustful, ambitious and costly domestic creature whose career becomes entangled with the SS and follows a similar curve towards the pit of cruelty - a process which baffles only its protagonist.

Halder suffers guilt for having half-abandoned his senile mother to an institution. His marriage to a charming, child-like but slutish musician is going tepid. He takes his angst and his sexual problems to the Jewish psychiatrist (analyst?) Maurice, whose slowly-dawning fears of Armageddon he blithely dismisses. Maurice equally blithely assures his friend that all his problems can be put down to what he calls (there is no hint of clinical understanding in Joe Melia's performance, though this is partly the fault of the script) "neurosis". Halder's affair with the beautiful young student is fuelled by a few private tutorials on the "relevance" of Freud. And his writings - particularly on the problem of the old, infirm, "useless" - have attracted interest in powerful quarters: from the study of Goethe he falls into the arms of Goering and Goebbels. He is soon part of the propaganda machine, lending his clear-headed human sympathies (exercised initially on his mother) to the programme for "euthanasia". Sexual prowess returns for Anne's benefit, but what he has been repressing rears with it: a hint of a *Faust* parallel suggests itself, as Halder remains the world at the cost of his soul.

There are two linking, glaringly ironic strands. One is that he is unaware of what is happening to him until the symptoms are manifested in obsessive wringing of hands, facial twitching and the rest. The other derives from the more innocent fantasy which reveals a "neurosis" from the beginning: at moments of crisis Halder hears a band playing in his head - all kinds of band, all kinds of music; which, psychologically acceptable and dramatically expedient as it is, prompts most of the excellent musical performances of the evening and also points the way to the play's most horrifying and grimly inevitable moment. Welcomed into Auschwitz,

where he has been sent to inspect and report on conditions, he hears the prisoners' band strike up - so successfully has he managed his screaming-out of the horror in which he has unwittingly or half-wittingly played his part - is as nothing to this overwhelming occurrence: it is a real band. He is "cured" at precisely the moment when he is effectively damned.

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It's part of the play's interest, and evasiveness, that though this is asked, it is not answered in any coherent way. Halder readily believes Anne - the student for whom he has deserted his wife - when she insists "We are good people. Good people". Of course such people as they in fact are seldom believe otherwise. The point is easily scored, but we are to adduce from Taylor's having scored it that he regards the civilized, "humane" intellectual's political innocence as automatically self-aggrandizing, hypocritical, contemptible? There is no "good" in any of the characters in his play, though all invoke extenuating circumstances in their favour; the problem, dramatically, is that this moral ambivalence precipitates a circularity, and a profound ambiguity, in the play itself. In such historic circumstances as Halder's, "good" is not a matter of conscience, of scruple and dwelling on the event: it is shown only in action. Acting as Halder does, a man automatically forfeits his claim to be "good". This is clear enough, but it is easy to feel that Taylor has, by the simple expedient of his title, added the semblance of a problematic moral dimension to what is a very different and, given the immensity of the crime, a more superficial argument.

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# Living by the image

By Valentine Cunningham

ALEXANDER WALKER:

Peter Sellers  
The Authorized Biography  
240pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £7.95.  
0 297 77965 6

MICHAEL SELLERS with SARA and  
VICTORIA SELLERS:  
P.S. I Love You  
Peter Sellers 1929-1980  
238pp. Collins. £7.95.  
0 10 21649 6

The continual ructions in Peter Sellers' life were tediously normal by Big Star standards. Quarrels over women (lots of those), over wives (four of those), over alimony and who should get the house, the apartments, the chalet in Switzerland, the boat and the car, over who should have custody of the children, how big the percentages should be and what light the publicity machine would have Mr Sellers seen in, this time: all these are only the regular part of gossip-columnists. What makes Sellers' case more interesting, as well as more permanent, is that such arguments are being continued so briskly after his death, and in books, by the parties who were rivals during his life for his affections and are now rivals for his money.

In the one corner, Alexander Walker's account, fearfully portentous beneath the burden of a great actor's reputation, offers itself as the "authorized" biography - authorized, one assumes, by Sellers' last wife, Lynne Frederick, who has contributed a long Preface and inherited all Sellers' boodle bar only a tiny smidgen. In the opposite corner, Michael Sellers ("with Sarah and Victoria Sellers"), his sister and half-sister) ripostes sturdily but in the less official, more plaintive voice of the children cut off by a neglectful, quarrelsome and very rich daddy with only a £20,000 trust fund each - besides the £2,000 apiece that he left, them in his grudging will.

Lovers of *The Goon Show*, who have the tones of Sellers' Major Bloodnok or his Bluebottle fixed indelibly in their recollecting memories, or film-goers with affectionate regard for his great roles as those hapless, pitiable victims of circumstances, things and jargons - the ted in *I'm a Ladykiller*, the shop-steward in *I'm All Right, Jack*, Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther films, Chancery Gardiner in the triumphant *Being There* - will doubtless find this literary tussle for ownership of the authentic image of Sellers the man very distressing. No doubt, too, they'll regret that the details of Sellers' private life turn out so frequently to be so unseemly. But that Sellers' image should still be in question is only apt: for the way he and others looked and seemed was Sellers' continuous, his lifetime's obsession.

Both of these accounts pile up the sadly narcissistic evidence: the diets and pills to keep his natural podginess at bay; the specs he was ashamed of and kept tucked into their case and his pocket; the teeth capped and shaped to make him look like Marcello Mastroianni and so impress Sophia Loren; the make-up he applied to Britt Ekland's scratches and his face-lift scars; the cosmetic surgery itself; the efforts at muscle-building so he could play James Bond; the harassing of his tailor to help him dress thin. He went in for so many carcase-enhancing medications and toiletries - painkillers, sleeping pills, stimulants, vitamin pills, digestion tablets, throat lozenges, creams, sprays, lotions - that, according to Michael, his nickname for the bedroom was "Boots". His swallowed pills, we are told, to boost his sexual potency. He wore a tracksuit so that he wouldn't look like a man with a heart-pacemaker. Terrified though he is said to have been of his huge horse, Hercules, he nonetheless painstakingly pretended to be an enthusiastic equestrian, especially when royalty was around. He would rush off during dinner to ring up his aides for

bits of information on topics he was uncertain about so he could drop a few showy names.

For Sellers in fact, the image, and especially the celluloid image, had become the most real reality. He got so that he couldn't fall in love without photographing the woman first. He cultivated photographers (Lord Snowdon became a particular friend) and spent a fortune on camera equipment. He would seek to impress his children and ex-wives with scraps of his latest woman. Michael tells how Sellers even invited Sarah to choose his next woman for him from a choice of photographed ladies. According to the story, she chose Lynne Frederick.

He who lives by the image, of course, perishes by the image. Excessive slimming probably helped weaken Sellers' heart. But he wasn't one to see the ironies, to make the connections, to anticipate trouble. His indiscretions to journalists (they included Alexander Walker) got him into hot water with Hollywood and with his last wife. Britt Ekland annoyed him by wanting to publish his love-letters in her memoirs; Loren peevish him by not granting him a single mention in hers. But instead of steering clear, Sellers preferred to sink himself ever deeper into the fantasy world of the promoter. We are told that he kidded himself that Loren would return his passion, that he faked hot phone conversations with Shirley McLaine, that he posed to his children as the self-made man - whereas he'd been assisted at every turn by his aggressive showbiz mum and his rosters of theatrical uncles. He was even, we learn, frequently drawn to the notion of walking on the water: Chance the Gardener's walking across the lake at the end of *Being There* was greatly to Sellers' taste. And he came to believe he could tinker with the self, could shave it down as easily as he shed fatty tissues. He settled eagerly for the image of himself as blanketed out, the person drained of all personality, who would only come alive as filmic roles were hung about him.

"There's no such person as Peter Sellers" became his pathetic boast. Alexander Walker argues with some conviction that Sellers was attracted to this pose because of his desire to outdo his hero and mentor Alec Guinness. In being emptied of himself, Sellers would go one better than Guinness's famous private facelessness. How consciously in command of the process the "Man of Many Voices" was from day to day is difficult to assess. There are plenty of disturbing stories of his finding it hard to shake "characters" off when left the studio. He even professed to believe that he was possessed in his film roles by selves from his own past lives. On the other hand, that this remained to the end the way he strove hard to appear is evident from his determined angling for the main part in *Being There*, in order to play the character who, a *tabula rasa* himself, lets others mould him in the images they wish to project on him.

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The results of this devoted mystifying, this playing with selves and absents of self, inevitably infect these books. In her preface Lynne Frederick strenuously repeats that she "understood" and "knew" Sellers best; Michael Sellers claims that he knew his father better. So, not surprisingly, there's much about Sellers on which Alexander Walker and Michael Sellers simply contradict each other. And these differences aren't merely the result of explicable variations between the journalist's slick story-line and smart prose ("The buffet left no tin of caviar unopened") and the young man's limp paragraphs: or between Michael's blunt "Me and My Dad" stuff and Walker's more ambitious deployment of Buddhist analogues and suspect genetic speculations about how much Sellers was programmed by the life of his forbear, the Jewish boxer Daniel Mendoza. Nor do they arise merely because of the "authorized" biographer's understandable desire to play down matters like the number of Sellers' women, the intensity of his relationships other than the one with Miss Frederick, the extent of his indulgence in marijuana, LSD and cocaine, his neglect of his children, his violence towards his women, the number of times he changed his will, and his alleged desire at the end to pack Miss Frederick in.

Much more than the differences of emphasis, reading and interpretation, it's the hard facts that remain stubbornly elusive. Where actually did Sellers meet Ekland? Did the children sell or merely give away wedding cake to the crowds at the Ekland wedding? Did Sellers own over two hundred or less than one hundred motor-cars? Why are Walker's figures for the cost of the yacht, the sale of a house to Ringo Starr, the aeroplane hirings and the total assets always so much less than Michael's? Whose table and in which country did Titi (or is it Titi) Wachtmeister's suitcase get chucked onto? Where exactly did Sellers spend the night on which he was frightened by *The Exorcist*? Was Britt (Walker) or Lynne (Michael) the more vulgarly ostentatious at the funeral? Did Britt smash Sellers' mother's portrait deliberately by or only accidentally? Are the children the baddies in this story, or is Miss Frederick? And the larger question of which party owns the true picture of the man is, of course, part of the equally unresolved dispute over who owns the moral rights to Sellers' cash. Once, again, it's fit that ownership disputes of various sorts should dog Sellers' reputation. For he was compulsively possessive.

Everyone agrees that as a child Peter Sellers was hideously spoiled by his mother Peg. Nobody was surprised he grew up fat and greedy. He wanted things on an inordinate scale. He would order twenty suits at a time. He loaded himself with gadgetry - tape-recorders, cameras, videos, telex machines, a mechanical elephant. He couldn't stop buying cars - Rolls, Aston Martins,



Photographs of nineteenth and early twentieth-century society have been in such demand recently that an industry has grown up to produce fake, sepia studies of urchins, comely nudes, prostitutes and other early posers and poseurs for the camera's lens. The cartoonist, Honeysett, in a delightful book, *The Not Another Book of Old Photographs Book* (64pp. Methuen. £3.95. 0 413 8590 1) takes the process further and has made a series of drawings which parody these photographic records of ways of life that have long disappeared. "Shearing sheep in Dorset" shows a sheep shearer inspecting itself in a mirror held up by the shearer; the men in "Refreshment stop for carners and van drivers" drink their tea from a horse-trough. The illustration reproduced here is of "Two flower sellers (one with hay fever)". The Preface to the book is by "The Unknown Social Historian" who is drawn sitting in front of a fire using a leg of his camera's tripod as a toasting fork.

Jaguars, Cadillacs, Ferraris, Porsches, a Bentley, a Mercedes. He would go into things for what he could get out of them: "What did it do for me?" he wailed, giving up yoga. He set himself to possess sexually all the women he ever worked with. He wanted to dictate the careers of his wives, to command the future by paying immense sums to a bustling crew of astrologers and fortune tellers. He always had rosters of mediums, yogis, swamis, mystics and clerics in tow. And he confirmed the power of owning by the reassuring act of repeated disowning. He cast off his fat, and wanted to make others do so too - like the woman he is said to have encouraged to diet in a New York hotel on the off-chance that he'd marry her when she'd trimmed down enough; or Orson Welles, with whom he quarrelled because he would jeer at the big man's bulk. In the same spirit he dropped his wives and disowned his children - a letter disclaiming Michael and a telegram saying he wishes not to hear from Sarah again are reproduced in Michael's book. Just as readily, Sellers gave loyal advisers and assistants the push. Getting rid of people came as easily to him as disposing of his trinkets at his regular "showers".

And if any single impression comes through clearly in these narratives in which so much is fudged and left blurred, it is the necessary dependence of human beings on others. Sellers' need for constant consolation, especially from the people he behaved badly towards, remains his most endearing characteristic. The fierce loyalties he provoked on every side - including the opposed sides represented by these two books - are in the end extremely moving. The real heroes, in fact, of Sellers' story are the people most unlike himself, the staunch ones whose affections remained steady: the friends of the "Suicide Watch", people like Bryan Forbes and Nanelle Newman, who would turn out at all hours to console him. In particular the other Goons, especially Spike Milligan, stayed loyal.

Rather startlingly, Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" was played at Sellers' funeral. But the Goons knew why. Sellers had requested it in a bout of *Goon Show* repartee with Milligan on the subject of funeral hymns. And playing it at the funeral paid tribute to Milligan's friendship as much as to Sellers' taste. Sellers was lucky to have such a chum. So it's only appropriate that both of these books should have Milligan uttering the best, the most telling lines. "You can't film despair," he told Tony Palmer who was making a film about Sellers. And to Michael: "Your father was always searching for a bloody heart attack as if it were a letter he knew had been posted and hadn't arrived."

You don't need Nina Ricci or Givenchy creations. I think your perfume's peachy and just like my Dalmatian.

Tony Harrison

## Scentsong

(after Marcus Valerius Martialis.III.55)

You swing past, a pong typhoon,  
a perfumic afflictus  
waffs over us and makes us swoon.  
What brand do you use to bait us?

Dior? One of Fabergé's?  
Fragrant (Chanel no 2)?  
Maybe your shower or bidet's  
been plumbed to pipe out Patou.

You don't need Nina Ricci  
or Givenchy creations.  
I think your perfume's peachy  
and just like my Dalmatian.

# The Liberation as restoration

By Douglas Johnson

JEAN-PIERRE RIOUX:

La France de la Quatrième République.  
Tome I: L'ardeur et la nécessité  
1944-1952.

314pp. Paris: Seuil.

Everyone has his own view of the Liberation of France in 1944 and the installation of the Fourth Republic. For some the Liberation of Paris remains one of the glorious episodes of French history, an event incorporating something of the taking of the Bastille, of Napoleon's "vol d'Aigle" and the Hundred Days, of Gambetta's escape from the siege of Paris, of the taxis of the Marne. It was the symbol of a regenerated France, when the Resistance wiped out the shame of defeat, when new men and new ideas laid the foundations for a new society, when the associated dangers of civil war and revolution were successfully avoided.

But for others the Liberation was a shameful episode, a meaningless spectacle, the prelude to a low and dishonest decade which ended in the agony of unjust and unsuccessful colonial wars. By the time of the final German capitulation in 1945 little expectation remained of change and progress. "Cette fin ressemblait à une mort", was the melancholy comment of Simone de Beauvoir when she heard the news. By the beginning of 1947 the old personnel of the Third Republic were back in place, with Edouard Herriot presiding over an unruly National Assembly and an aged Léon Blum over a short-lived government. The Cold War, the Marshall Plan, the conflict in Indo-China and a series of violent strikes, all seemed to lead inexorably to the defeat of Resistance idealism, symbolized by the choice of Antoine Pinay, a former member of the Vichy National Council, to be Prime Minister in 1952. The Liberation was simply, according to this view, another turning-point when France failed to turn.

Jean-Pierre Rioux covers this period in a lively and attractive book, the first of two volumes to be devoted to the Fourth Republic. With remarkable skill he succeeds in bringing together both a considerable amount of information and a sense of interpretation and understanding, so making this one of the most attractive books to appear in an excellent series (which is shortly to come out in an English translation). Rioux is preoccupied with the problem of how it was that liberated France, so alive with possibilities for creation and achievement, should have tumbled off into a Republic which, whatever its virtues, became a by-word for failure and frustration. Implicit in his explanation are a number of consid-

erations, the most weighty of which appears to be that of economic necessity. "La pauvreté fatigait", he remarks, a shade sententiously, and repeatedly he puts forward the imperious requirements of the economy as the reason why certain decisions were taken or particular choices made. If the promise - part of the programme elaborated by the Conseil National de la Résistance - to nationalize certain key sectors of the economy was largely carried out, the nationalization itself was a very different process from "les nationalisations sauvages" made at the behest of Resistance groups in Lyon or in Marseille, or planned by such ministers as the communist Marcel Paul. The personnel installed in the new nationalized sector were in no way representative of the élites of the Liberation, but very much those who had served Vichy or were the inveterate enemies of socialism and "étatism". And why? Primarily, suggests Rioux, because time was short; it was imperative for production to increase.

Similarly, "le New Deal social" and the establishment of the Social Security system, was violated by the decline in the standard of living of the wage-earning population. In 1949, if the average number of hours worked per week had increased by 12 per cent, as compared to 1944, the purchasing power of wages had decreased by some 25 per cent. This was the unfortunate result of inflation. In the spring of 1946 a mission to Washington headed by Blum and Monnet accepted the exigencies of American dollar diplomacy. "La France pauvre", explains Rioux, knew its place. All this is to assume a certain neutrality and inactivity on the part of French governments, and indeed of the French state, as if there was no alternative to the decisions which were taken. Not all historians will accept this.

There is a similar suggestion of determinism in political developments after the Liberation. With the resignation of General de Gaulle in January 1946 (a resignation which, incidentally, does not seem to arouse much curiosity on the part of the author) we are told that the period of provisional government was over, meaning presumably that the options open to the politicians were henceforth limited. The communists were not ready to abandon their share of power, nor prepared to engage in a dialogue with the social Catholics, the Mouvement Républicain Populaire; the socialists were fearful of a Popular Front government with the variety of problems concerned with transport and finance necessitated the continued services of administrators with specialized training and competence.

of tripartism, whereby the three parties joined together in an uneasy coalition and the leadership of the country devolved on statesmen whose sole preoccupation was with a restricted, and often meaningless, game of politics.

Thus we are confronted with an apparently inevitable process: logical, neat and natural. But in fact the political negotiations were much more complex than Rioux allows for. He presents the MRP as having been influenced, in January 1946, by the intervention of an important figure on the General Staff, General Billotte, a friend of Maurice Schumann, but does not mention that this intervention is usually taken to have threatened some type of move by the French army should a communist become Prime Minister, and it must be doubted whether such a threat was decisive in determining the MRP's action.

Fundamental to Rioux's picture of the Liberation is his account of the *épuration*, the process whereby those who had collaborated with the enemy or been identified with Vichy were to be punished and removed from any positions of power and influence. As he shows, in one of the most impressive sections of his book, the *épuration* was extremely limited, and with the exception of isolated incidents, and in spite of exaggerated claims and rumours, the number of those who were executed or imprisoned was surprisingly small. The inescapable film-shots and photographs of women with shaven heads being insulted by jeering crowds because they had supposedly been the lovers of German soldiers aptly sum up the Liberation as a spectacle and the *épuration* as a process where it was the unpunished who were punished, while those who had collaborated in a more significant manner were often unaffected. The result was that there was no real purge of the administration, no effective renewal of the notabilities, no shake-up of the bourgeoisie.

Rioux explains this by his usual method of pointing to the constraints imposed by economic necessity. France needed its businessmen as it needed its shopkeepers, irrespective of whether the one or the other had forgotten their patriotic duties. Were he English he might have made some joke about the customer being always right even if he were wearing jack-boots. The urgent need to produce food meant that those who had been prominent in Vichy's Corporation Paysanne retained their grip on agricultural organizations and a wide variety of problems concerned with transport and finance necessitated the continued services of administrators with specialized training and competence.

But behind this it is suggested that there lay an even more powerful constraint: the population as a whole did not want a severe judgment passed upon those who had participated in the Occupation, because to do so would have been to judge them selves. In a telling remark quoted by Rioux, Jean-Marie Domenach wrote, "on avait peur de l'ampleur même du crime". There was a tendency to be satisfied by the show-trials of Pétain, Laval, Brasillach and others, and by settlement of old scores against the "pharmaciens du coin" who had supposedly made a fortune by selling toothpaste to the Boches. "There will come a day," said de Gaulle in 1943, "when France will need to know vengeance". By 1945 this was no longer the case and de Gaulle, with characteristic realism, recognized it as a fact and utilized it in order to avoid the irreparable bitterness which would have accompanied any more generalized blood-letting.

This interpretation is a popular one these days. We are told that there were forty million Pétainistes in France, and both academic and popular historians have told us that the number of those in Resistance movements was small whereas the number of those who simply acquiesced was great. More philosophically, the historian can agree with the character in *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* who asked if it were necessary for a society to hate itself? Perhaps we are witnessing another example of the well-known ability of the French to adapt themselves to circumstances. Hitler expressed astonishment that they did not offer a more determined resistance and a British ambassador in Paris at the time of the Liberation, Duff Cooper, pointed out that there was less conflict between the Resistance movements and the established administration there than in other countries (such as Belgium or Greece).

Yet even if all this happens to be true, it remains necessary to explain why it is true. From 1934 onwards

there was a popular movement which was vigorous in its condemnation of fascism. After 1940 there was a movement which succeeded in organizing a persecution of Jews and foreigners which was more intensive and terrible than the *épuration*. It could be argued that neither movement can take the initiative and achieve results, and that the action of governments can be more than merely influential. It is necessary to study these more positive elements and not to be over-impressed by determining restraints. One should not explain away the Liberation by the fact that the French public soon became fascinated by the rumours (and photographs) of moonlight bathing in the nude, supposedly a nightly occurrence on the estates of Aly Khan.

Marxist historians will criticize Rioux because he treats French society as if it were a vacant lot, and does not consider it in terms of classes. Other historians might wonder whether he should not have concentrated more on certain other aspects of the Liberation. Like Italy at the time of the Risorgimento, it was foreign powers which imposed their rhythm on the process of French emancipation, and as the newspaper *Combat* was to put it, a revolution which has to wait is a revolution which aborts. The "commissaires de la République", who were frequently inexperienced, ill-informed and isolated, improvised a system of administration as territory was liberated; precisely the type of loose and flexible administration least susceptible to attack by the classical type of revolution. Such considerations, and others like them, are helpful in understanding why 1944 ushered in something which was less like a liberation than a restoration, and would usefully complete this well organized, schematic history.

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## Proper Place

The proper place is almost inside Eden,  
Almost outside where we nearly always are.  
That light as bright as ever - though his eyes  
Are not, the person peering through the railing.

Both prisoner and free, at home and foreign,  
Near enough to smell the grass of innocence,  
Almost taste the apple wormless at the core.  
At the core of almost is his business,  
Almost his inspiration.

The dark as dark as ever, even more so.  
Things go by opposites, they come from all directions,  
Other tastes, distances, and other smells.  
Dark on light, light against dark, defines itself,  
Almost extremities suffice.

Like Janus in two minds, a would-be god of gateways,  
Like someone crouching, not erect, not fallen,  
Waiting for a race to start, or bending over papers,  
The right position too for verses.

D. J. Enright



# The shaping of the cities

By John A. Davis

CESARE DE SETA and LEONARDO DI MAURO:  
Palermo  
211pp. L14,000.

GIOVANNI RICCI:  
Bologna  
191pp. L14,000.

ENRICO POLEGGI and PAOLO CEVINI:  
Genova  
290pp. L19,000  
Bari: Laterza.

Cities have always been an endless source of headaches not only for those who try to live in them or govern them, but also for those who try to write about them. Twenty years ago Lewis Mumford demonstrated the degree of cultural preparation required by anyone venturing to write the history of the city, or even of a city, which may explain why few have dared to follow where he led. And if when it appeared Mumford's incomparable study was thought by many to be unduly pessimistic, looking back on it now, with the summer of 1981 just behind us, that pessimism seems only too well justified.

The great achievement of *The City in History* was to demonstrate that we can only begin to comprehend the city once we begin to understand its past. Only by discovering what the city has been, where it has come from, how and why it has changed, can we begin to say what it is, why it is and what it could be. This new series of Italian monographs, "Le Città nella Storia d'Italia", which will, when completed, cover the history of more than twenty of Italy's historic cities from their origins to the present, is very much in the spirit of Lewis Mumford, although it develops a quite different approach to the subject. It is no accident that its general editor, Cesare de Seta, should be a Neapolitan, for the series is addressed to the contemporary agony of the great Italian cities. But although de Seta and the majority of his fellow authors are architectural historians by training, like Mumford they utterly reject the view that the problems facing the cities today are essentially technical in nature and origin. They see the renaissance of the modern city, the humanizing of megalopolis, as depending ultimately on an act, or acts, of collective political will – the city, for better and worse, has not just happened but been fashioned. To recover it we must therefore have an understanding of what the city has been, of what has been lost and what can and should be restored.

Despite the exceptional importance of the city in Italy's history, this is the first attempt to write the histories of cities themselves. Oceans of ink have been devoted to specific aspects of the city or groups of cities in different periods, and there are multi-volume histories now of Milan, Brescia and Naples, with others probably in preparation. Yet these are not histories of the cities as such, but rather of the political and economic systems centred on them. In this sense the title of de Seta's series – "The City in the History of Italy" – is slightly misleading, because it is not the city itself that is the subject, but the way in which the city has been shaped by the historians who have been writing for not more than a century about the city in history, but more specific information on the history of individual cities.

It is one of the merits of the series, to judge from the three volumes to hand on Palermo, Genova and Bologna, that the editor and his colleagues have not allowed the massiveness of the task to deter them from adopting an admirably down-to-earth and straightforward approach. Their architectural training leads them naturally to focus first and foremost on the bricks and mortar, the walls, thoroughfares and open spaces that make up the urban fabric. But they do not overlook Rousseau's warning that "houses make towns, only citizens can make a city", which takes us to the heart

of the city as an institution. The crucial problem is to see how and why at different moments an urban society succeeded in moulding and directing the city in a particular form and direction. Here one can detect the influence of the kind of urban history pioneered by such French scholars as Marcel Roncayolo, rather than the Anglo-Saxon variety which made tools of the demographer, the sociologist or the economic historian. Essentially, this is an attempt to steer a middle course between the abstract generalizations of "l'histoire urbaine" and the narrow technicality of traditional "histoire urbanistique".

The three cities could hardly differ more strikingly, and they reveal clearly both the strengths and the limitations of the method the authors have adopted. The essential data for the reconstruction of the physical development of each city are drawn from maps, town plans and "townscapes". Yet these were rarely if ever – at least before the advent of the modern tax-man – produced purely, or even primarily, for descriptive purposes alone, but are major iconographical sources in their own right. The changing image of the city – and every Italian city has its own identity: *Roma Santa, Veneta ricca, Genova superba, Milano grande, Bologna grassa, Ravenna antica* – reveals much more than a mere development of technical expertise in matters of town planning. The changing "idealization" of the city provides a window on the values and aspirations of those who controlled its destiny at a given moment and moulded its physical development.

Intelligent interpretation of maps and plans advance us quite far in reconstructing the ways in which urban society expressed itself through the fabric of its city. The chaos of medieval Genoa reflected one social reality – that of its factional and warring nobility, shut away from their clans in their fortified *alberghi*. Only when the Doria family rose above the rest, imposing political stability, did a more ordered and structured approach to the city's development become possible, resulting in the famous Strada Nuova, which was to make Genoa one of the civic wonders of the western world. But in its cautious refusal to spread far beyond the bounds of its medieval walls, in its striking absence of public squares and meeting-places, Genoa was to bear permanently the imprint not of geographical constraints but of the private enterprise which lay at the heart of the city's success.

## Over from Italy

By Raleigh Trevelyan

FILIPPO DONINI:  
Da Cesare a Enza  
E altre storie di italiani in Inghilterra  
133pp. Rome: Trevi. L5,000.

Filippo Donini, who lived in London for eighteen years and was a popular director of the Italian Institute there, is qualified indeed to write about that well-known love-affair between his country and ours. His short book, however, does not attempt to delve in detail into the influence of Italy on British cultural life. His aim, he tells us, is simply to examine the personalities involved. In other words he has provided a kind of light-hearted but useful anthology of Italians famous and not so famous, chiefly – though not exclusively – writers and artists; who over the centuries have visited our shores or even lived here.

Shakespeare described Caesar as an Italian, so Professor Donini begins with stories familiar to us about wood and *Veni, vidi, vici*. He quotes Malaparte's description of Roman

In Bologna, on the other hand, social integration and urban development were sadly out of tune. Bologna's age of glory and premature self-awareness had been in the thirteenth century, thanks almost entirely to the international reputation of its university; but by the time the plans designed to accommodate the city to this new-found fame had been realized, Bologna's reputation had withered and with it the prosperity it had brought. The still recognizable porticoed city was left separated by green fields and open spaces from its new walls, and was to remain almost unchanged in structure down to the nineteenth century – making it one of the most obviously archaic cities in Italy at the time of unification.

Palermo followed a different pattern again, dictated more by the sequence of conquests and princely rulers to which it was subject. Inheriting from the Arabs an urban structure and organization centuries in advance of the rest of Europe, its fundamental structure was to remain largely unchanged until modern times and reflected above all the aspirations and pretensions of its rulers – balanced at times by those of the great Sicilian baronage. The result was an elegance and a refinement which proved to be all too vulnerable in a more materialistic age.

The iconographical sources also reveal the qualitative changes that occurred in the nineteenth century, when idealization gives way to geometric precision, and social values and cultural aspirations to the cruder mathematics of the market. But such sources can not do more than point the way. It only becomes possible to trace the precise relationship between society and city when other information is available and other sources have been explored. Enrico Poleggi and Paolo Cevini draw on fiscal and notarial sources to trace the distribution of property in Genoa from the Middle Ages up until the present (confirming among other things the crucial role played by the Church in the process of urbanization in both the medieval and the post-Trentine periods), but otherwise such evidence is notable mainly for its absence and this at times makes certain statements about the social origins of urban developments seem unduly inferential.

All three books are concerned to demonstrate the connection between an active cultural and civic awareness and harmonious urban development. Giovanni Ricci, for example, argues that the reason why Bologna failed

to participate in the Baroque craze for urban renovation was that after the fall of the Bentivoglio and the incorporation of the city into the Papal States, the Bolognese patriciate lost all sense of civic autonomy and identity. The individual Bolognese continued to build, rebuild and decorate his possessions, but the structure of the city itself, its public buildings, its roads and streets, its open spaces, remained largely untouched. The contemporary significance of the connection is spelled out most clearly by Paolo Cevini when he contrasts the plans of the socialist mayor of Sestri at the start of the century, Carlo Canepa, to create a new industrial metropolis on the Ligurian coast, with the disorganized and suffocating sprawl of the Genoese industrial suburbs in the same years.

The nineteenth century was to be the moment of retribution for all three cities, and each author carefully retraces the ways in which the traditional urban structure and fabric was degraded in the century after Italian unification. It is a depressing story, but one that needs to be told. Older aspirations, methods and materials were cast aside in obedience to the new gods of speed, utility and profit. Even if the appalling aberrations of taste committed by the Risorgimento bourgeoisie, and in particular their heirs, were not quite so bad as elsewhere in Europe, they were all the more damaging for being inflicted on an urban patrimony of incomparable value. In Italy it was not unknown villages that grew into industrial metropolises, but rather the historic towns themselves which were forced into the new mould. Everywhere the railway station now provided the city with a new and often quite unsuitable focus, the rectangular monotony of new residential blocks and axial highways obliterated the subtler contours of earlier planners, and as the new suburbs rose to satisfy the mania for speculation so the traditional centres began to die of decay and neglect. Hence even those cities, like Naples and Palermo, which were not exactly the most enthusiastic converts to the new age, proved capable of learning its vices more quickly than its benefits. Here frenetic speculation proved every bit as damaging as industrial pollution, and as rents and leases leapt up astronomically the conditions of the old disease-ridden quarters grew worse, while new ones appeared that would vie with them for squalor and decay within years rather than decades.

As the story is retold for Bologna, Genoa and then Palermo, it becomes more poignant and more scandalous. But the indictment is at times weakened by the tendency of these authors to simplify the causes of decay, evident for example in their romanticized comparisons between the pre- and post-industrial city. It seems fairly clear that Italian cities were already deeply in crisis well before the onset of any "industrial revolution". From the beginning of the eighteenth century, Palermo, Naples and Genoa were no longer able to accommodate the demands being placed on the urban fabric, particularly because of the relentless rise in population after the respite of the previous century. The vogue for building *alberghi dei poveri*, madhouses and civic hospitals was a monumental rather than an effective attempt to respond to these pressures. But behind the growing poverty and overcrowding can be seen the failure of those economic systems which had previously supported the cities – be it the international trading empire of Genoa or the monopoly over the agricultural production of its hinterland exercised by Palermo.

One of the things that the history of these cities reveals very clearly is that from the earliest times the city was an institution particularly ill-adapted to sudden or even gradual change. Both overcrowded medieval Genoa and empty medieval Bologna make the same point in different ways – the city was often trapped by its own past, so that the very fabric which provided its historical continuity could easily become its prison. In this sense, the experience of the last century was new in scale but not in form.

Not that this can excuse the damage caused by a century and more of mindless materialism; but nor does it help us to understand the problems facing the city if we simply the process of industrialization or over-estimate its historically demonstrated capacity for change and adaptation. But it is one of the great virtues of these three studies that they resolutely resist the temptation to be lulled by the seductive but ultimately false promise that they provide what is ultimately only one of the many alternative histories that could be written, but one that has been unduly neglected. The series has the added attraction of being beautifully and lavishly illustrated. For all its relative moderate price, but, more to the point, it raises questions that are important not just to historians but to all those who live in cities and care about their future. It provides strong historical confirmation for the view that society gets the cities, like the governments, it deserves.

harking back no doubt to the Lombard bankers.

Donini points out how in Elizabethan drama Italians are usually depicted as being capable of monstrous crimes. Not so though in Shakespeare, where with the main exception of Iago the plays are full of happy, charming or romantic characters with Italian or Italian-sounding names. I was surprised that Donini missed including A. L. Rowse's discovery of the Dark Lady. The interesting section about Italian artists and architects in the eighteenth century made me wish that there had been a bibliography. The mention of Palladio and Canaletto leads to one of the book's many digressions, when scorns the nickname Little Venice for a *quartiere* that was nothing more than a Venetian market for the *dilettoso* Shepherd's Market was a far better claim to that honour.

Milton was the supreme *italianista* (though surely no *diavolo*). Garibaldi the most popular Italian ever in the British. *Castro* and *longer* by with monkeys may no longer be associated in our minds with Italians, but the affection – mutual – is still there, as Donini reaffirms in this pleasant book.

RENATO DE FUSCO:  
L'Architettura dell'Ottocento  
244p. L32,000.  
8 802 03523 7

CESARE DE SETA:  
L'Architettura del Novecento  
320pp. L32,000.  
8 802 03523 X  
Turin: UTET

A history of art in Italy – the title is a subterfuge. These books are not to be confused with the thirteen volumes of the much more ambitious History of Italian Art, edited for Einaudi by Giovanni Previtali and Federico Zeri – which is now complete. That was an enterprise quite brilliant in the planning though, perhaps inevitably, uneven in the execution. UTET, as the initials seem to imply, they stand in fact for Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, go at the business in a more matter-of-fact way, chopping the period since the Middle Ages (which alone get three volumes) up into century-long sections, with one volume for sculpture, one for painting and one for architecture in each section. The binding of these volumes is utilitarian, the printing (except for the colour) decent, the layout tasteless.

The History of Italian Art is still dominated by Adolfo Venturi's twenty-five thick, shiny volumes which took forty years to publish; he broke off at 1600. There have been a number of attempts at doing the job since Venturi, but nothing on the scale of the Einaudi or the present UTET enterprise. The first of these, which is almost entirely thematic, is complemented by the second, which is entirely chronological. It says something strange about Italy that the market can absorb two multi-volume histories of the country's art simultaneously. It is not only that the Italians are thought to have more art than we do; they also buy more books. The only equivalent British enterprise was launched many years ago by the OUP and not completed until very recently. And if another such series were to be projected, I am sure no sensible publisher would open it with his volume on nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture, which would be commercial ruin. This, again, is not so much a comment on modern British architecture, as on the place of architecture in British cultural life.

I hope, anyway, that UTET's market-research has been thorough and that the optimism about the expanding demand for this kind of book is well-founded. Both these volumes are very good in their different ways. Renato de Fusco's is in a way the more original, in that it has no exact predecessor. Carroll Meeks's *Italian Architecture 1750-1914*, published fifteen years ago, comes the closest to it, though it was blunt and sometimes inept. The only book with the same title as de Fusco's is a small paper-back of 1937.

The structure of the book is curious. The first half covers Neo-classicism, and devotes one chapter to each region: Lombardy, Rome, Naples, Tuscany, the Veneto, Piedmont. The second half is given over to different styles: Romantic, Gothic revival, Renaissance revival. There is also a chapter on the "Poetry of Iron", and another on the cities of Italian unity; hardly surprising since Italy had three capitals in rapid succession during the nineteenth century: Turin, Florence and Rome. The greatest oddity, however, is a whole chapter on Alessandro Antonelli, an architect whose rehabilitation is very recent.

Antonelli's work is still very perplexing. A provincial – he never worked outside Piedmont – he was wholly obsessed with two particular structural problems: The first was to support entire structures on points only – on columns and piers instead of walls, an idea he took over from the old Polytechnic school of engineers. This led him to persuade poor parish priests who came to him

for advice about their leaky roofs to pull down their churches and rebuild them according to his principles; he even got the chapter of the romanesque cathedral at Novara to rebuild it with a vault, carried on monolithic columns. Over the crossing of the sixteenth-century church of San Gaudentio, also in Novara, he was asked to put a dome. His original plan was for one roughly the shape of the Paris Pantheon, but this is where his second obsession came in: he "modified" his scheme until the dome was three times its original height, and that is how it was built.

In order to satisfy these two obsessions Antonelli had to develop structures which had no sideways thrust, but transmitted dead weight only, and he did this by developing a system of wrought-iron ties of quite tensile strength. He even attempted them and then releasing the tension, a kind of pre-stressed masonry. His great – and final – triumph was the Mole Antonelliana, a building which in its time was topped only by the Washington Monument, and took almost as long to build. It was commissioned by the Turin Jewish community as both a synagogue and a centenary monument to Jewish emancipation in 1863. In the next year the capital of Italy was moved to Florence and the building partly abandoned. The Turin Jewish community was not to see the building completed, but the building was not to see the city. Antonelli was then 71 and living in an apartment overlooking the site. The unfinished building was thereupon bought by the city and work resumed; first as a home for the regional assembly, and after its abolition as a museum-monument of Italian Unity. The high internal hall was supported on columns and piers, of course, and roofed with a square dome of four parabolic vaults. These were made up of two brick skins only 122 cm thick, reinforced by diagonal ribs and crowned by an enormously tall granite spire. The internal reinforcements were so ingenious that they allowed the structure to move; which so frightened Antonelli's successors that they thickened the structure until the high hall became a forest of rigid concrete struts.

The old man himself was a heroic figure. He would arrive on the site every morning, pick up a brick from each cartload as it was driven through the gate and strike it with a hammer. If the sound was unconvincing, he would reject the whole batch. By the side of the building in which he lived (and which he had designed) he built a six-storey test structure on a tiny triangular site: a staircase and one room per floor. It was the only building in the neighbourhood to survive an earthquake unscathed.

Antonelli was admired by his contemporaries, and the building of the Mole which carries his name was supported by the local engineers' Institute. The reinforcing of the structure with concrete has kept its silhouette intact; and when the spire was struck by lightning in 1933 the city rebuilt it in aluminium. Nietzsche thought it one of the most beautiful buildings he had ever seen.

All this is worth detailing, because Antonelli is such an uncomfortable

figure. His work is in no recognizable style: the ornament all comes from standard text-books on the orders and suchlike, the structures are without real precedent – or consequence, since the structural refinements Antonelli developed were to be made obsolete by the development of steel and concrete, as well as by the decay of the building crafts. De Fusco unfortunately tries to explain all this in terms of "code" and "messages", but in so far as ornament for Antonelli was a system without any specific charge, it was a constraint which allowed him structural liberty by way of a blind faith in the classical principles.

It is a pity that de Fusco's book is marred elsewhere also by such semiotic twaddle, which leads him to make a number of curious judgments. For instance, Jappelli's Caffè Pedrocchi in Padua appears both in the "Romantic" and in the "Gothic" chapters, though it is a very small building. Of Romantic and reaction-ary classicism he has little to say, since he takes classicism itself at face value. On the other hand he gives a very interesting account of such little-known episodes as the building of the silk-weavers' settlement at San Leucio near Caserta by Ferdinand IV, or of the strange cisterns at Livorno by Pasquale Poccianti. He is good on Selva, Nobile and other Venetians, and uncovers one or two curiosities, like the cast-iron church at Follonica – of 1838! There are excellent moments for the later periods, too: on Boito, for instance, or the Gallerie, or on Giuseppe Poggi's Florence.

Cesare De Seta is another Neapolitan, and this makes it easy for him to do justice to a compatriot often overlooked in accounts of modern architecture. Luigi Cozzani. But his is not that kind of partisan book, "regional" in the bad sense. Instead it is uncommonly well written, with an informed passion and a healthy partisanship. De Seta, of course, has not forgotten Antonelli to deal with, though he does try to promote one or two secondary characters into the first rank, which is as should be. What does spoil his book is the division he makes between architecture and industrial design, which is dealt with in an essay by Maria Perone. She has neither de Seta's panache nor his mastery of the material, and the slips she makes are sometimes unfortunate: she undervalues the two Swiss émigrés, Max Huber, one of the best graphic designers not only in Italy, but in the world, and Xanti Schawinsky (whom she spells Schawinski), to make him look exotic; the Basler Bauhauser who helped Renato Zwitermeyer and Marcello Nizoli to create the "Olivetti Style" before disappearing into Black Mountain College and the Manhattan jungle.

Still, the extraordinary explosion of Italian design is chronicled here: Nizzoli's typewriters for Olivetti (Lettera 22 and Lexikon), his sewing-machine for Necchi (of 1954), the Vespa and Lambretta, the Espresso coffee-machine: all have had an enormous influence on our environment, on world industrial design, and on the Italian economy. But that is not the reason why the social status of architects and designers in Italy is so difficult to understand, when seen from Britain, or the

figure. This interesting phenomenon de Seta, writing for an Italian public, takes for granted. But consider that in 1933 the Breda motor-works commissioned Pagano and Poni (the editors of *Casabella* and *Domus*, the two leading Italian architectural magazines) to design an electric high-speed train; or that Zavanella's designs are still to be found on most of the better-known Italian film directors (Antonioni must serve as an example) were trained as architects, and the peculiarity of Italy in this respect becomes apparent. Schools of architecture there are thronged today much as the faculties of law were before the war, though only a fraction of their students will ever have anything to do with building or even industrial design. They go there because of the enormous prestige of architecture as a discipline, because they believe (wrongly as it happens) that it provides one with the best general education and helps one to change the world.

Norman Shaw was perhaps the last British architect to be treated by poets and painters as their intellectual equal, as a natural ally. By the next generation there had been a social shift which outlawed men such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh. His case may have been an odd one but there can be no doubt he was born out of his time. Mackintosh was envious of his continental colleagues, particularly those in Vienna, and he must also have envied Raimondo d'Aronco, whose *pavillon d'honneur* dominated the Turin Exhibition of Decorative Art in 1902. This exhibition enabled de Seta to open his book with a real bang. Art Nouveau, indeed, and Futurism occupy the first chapter of his book. He figures a figure who might have figured larger here, but unfortunately he belongs to both centuries and so divides between the two books. After the 1914-18 war there is the Ventennio characterized by *Novecento*, Rationalism and the official academy. After the Second World War we get reconstruction, the economic miracle, realism and populism. The power-games, the complex intrigues and the tragic commitment of figures such as the convinced fascist Pagano, who nevertheless chooses the equally convinced anti-fascist Edoardo Persico as a close collaborator, are brilliantly described. De Seta is less easy to follow, however, when he writes about the post-war period, particularly when devoting a page to a defence of the cultural policy of the Communist party under Togliatti – surely he must know that Togliatti came to power the present book would not have been worth writing?

Scathing though de Seta is about the populists, it seems clear that he finally sympathizes with them for all their mistakes. There are one or two other figures to whom he is less fair: Gio Ponti, for instance, whose influence on Italian architecture has been much more insidious than he allows, and whose management of design and craft has inspired many successors. Nor, generally, does de Seta take account of the enormous attraction which both Paris and Vienna have exercised, and continue to exercise (particularly the Vienna of Kraus, Freud, and the Karl-Marx Hof) on Italian artists and architects.

Francis Albini, 1930-1970 (184pp. 116 plates. Academy Editions. £10.50: 0 85670 739 2) is a catalogue of an exhibition of the work of the Italian architect. It has been co-ordinated and documented by Franca Helg who has been his associate for some time. Besides the Introductory Note by Franca Helg, the catalogue contains a Biographical Profile, a contribution by Cesare de Seta on "Franco Albini, Architect: Between Rationalism and Technology", which deals with his architecture, another by Marcello Pagnolo on "The Genesis of a Language: Design and Expositions (1930-1945)", about Albini's work as a designer, and a section on his housing projects entitled "Urban Planning and Collective Dwellings".

Teazles

Teazles in the swamp  
With the convolvulus  
Climbing among them, the willows  
Backing them up.

So plenty, although it is poor  
And in decay!  
Harsh world, where all is  
And nothing stays!

This is to lamb's wool  
And the nettles fade;  
No need to be here  
When spring comes again.

C. H. Sisson

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"Black Pudden Republic" reviewed by The Times Literary Supplement – September 4th, 1981.

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# More myth than movement

By Dan Sperber

**SIMON CLARKE:**  
*Foundations of Structuralism*  
264pp. Brighton: Harvester. £20.  
0 85527 978 8

In a recent issue of the *TLS* (July 31, 1981), Ernest Gellner warned the reader against "accepting structuralism as some overall revelation in human and social studies". For one who has lived in Paris through the 1960s and 70s (not the reader whom Gellner had in mind, of course), this is a melancholy anachronism. On the banks of the Seine, structuralism is way past the revelation stage. Gone are the days of resistance, of scandal, of triumph. Dust has settled on the once sacred books. Well-entrenched academics teach structuralism to bored students who beg for something new. The current structuralist vogue in English-speaking countries gives one an uncanny feeling of déjà vu.

I had never come across, though, anything quite like Simon Clarke's *Foundations of Structuralism*. Of course, Clarke does occasionally find low well-trodden paths (or blind alleys). He takes up, for instance, the image of a structuralist movement: the main figures in which would be Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Foucault, Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, and Tel Quel. "Structuralism" in that sense was invented by the professional promoters of the French intellectual scene as a catchy means of referring collectively to the celebrities of the 1960s. The celebrities concerned all protested that they did not belong to a common movement, and most of them rejected the "structuralist" label altogether; but who cared?

Actually, a loose and less flam-

boyant structuralist movement did develop around Lévi-Strauss, Émile Benveniste, Barthes, A. J. Greimas, J.-P. Vernant, Tzvetan Todorov, Christian Metz, Oswald Ducrot and others. Its history has yet to be written. Its very existence seems to be ignored by many would-be specialists of structuralism. Clarke, for one, does not mention most of the relevant scholars, not even Benveniste, whose influence on French structuralism was second to none.

Clarke's approach is also unbalanced in other, more original ways. His book purports to be "a critique of Lévi-Strauss and the structuralist movement". In the introduction, we learn that criticisms of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism will suffice since "they apply with equal, or even greater force to the more sophisticated variants that are now current among the avant-garde". Then, it turns out that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is encapsulated in his first book, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*: "[w]hich establishes the foundation of structuralism. In it the structuralist conception of society, the structural method, and the structuralist human philosophy are developed for the first time." *The Elementary Structures* (in most opinions, a marginal monument rather than the foundation of Lévi-Strauss's later work) gets three times as much space as *Totemism*, *The Savage Mind*, the two volumes of *Structural Anthropology*, and the four volumes of *Mythologiques* put together. Ultimately, Clarke's discussion concentrates on one chapter of *The Elementary Structures*, devoted to the "principle of reciprocity". There lies structuralism in a nutshell, ready to be further crushed.

At one point, Clarke sternly objects against structural semanticists that words are "always changeable

and adaptable, their meaning is different for different people", and, his own book indeed offers some good examples of how idiosyncratic word meaning can be. *Founders*, for instance, in the introduction, Lévi-Strauss is "the founder of structuralism": a hundred and forty pages later, we learn that "it was from Roman Jakobson that Lévi-Strauss first learned about structuralism". Or *Freudian*, as in "For Lévi-Strauss the individual is Freudian, though purged of all irrationalism by the reduction of the unconscious to a purely formal structuring capacity."

Or again, Clarke accuses Lévi-Strauss, Sartre and others of being metaphysical. I assumed that the word was to be understood in the loose, polemical sense introduced by Marx, until I discovered, at the end of the book, that Lévi-Strauss's own particular "metaphysical device" is "biological materialism".

Clarke's redefinition of logical equivalence might startle philosophers of science. There has been, he writes, a proliferation of theories of language in the wake of Chomsky... all of which are logically equivalent in the sense that each tries to produce a mechanism that can reproduce the grammatical sentences of the language and the proponents of each claim that their model is simpler, more intuitive or more "natural" (italics added). In that sense, of course, Clarke's discussion of structuralism is logically equivalent to all the others, since all "try", and all "claim" superiority.

Clarke's full inventiveness comes out in his handling of facts. We learn, for instance, that "Lévi-Strauss's work, and particularly *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, has been the main stimulus to the de-

velopment of structuralism as an intellectual movement". Actually, it is a safe bet that less than ten per cent of all the self-proclaimed (or alleged) structuralists of any note have ever read *Les Structures élémentaires* (which never came near the best-seller list, unlike most of Lévi-Strauss's other books). Again, the anthropologist Louis Dumont is said to have been "trained in the Oxford tradition". In fact, he was already well trained in the French tradition when he went to teach at Oxford.

And then, Chomsky's linguistics "has nothing to tell us about meaning", but this must be a different Chomsky from the one listed in the bibliography as the author of *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar*. The Chomsky discussed in the text has made a "key contribution" to structuralism, whereas the other, better-known Chomsky has violently attacked structuralism and developed generative grammar as an alternative.

Clarke writes: "Chomsky's approach to linguistics and psychology is very like Piaget's approach to cognition and psychology, and Lévi-Strauss regards Piaget as well as Chomsky as a pioneer of the nativism to which he too subscribes." Actually, both Piaget and Lévi-Strauss accept as innate only the most general and simple mental structures, whereas Chomsky sees the human mind as comprising several complex and specialized sub-structures. Piaget and Lévi-Strauss do not, therefore, regard themselves as nativists and are radically opposed to Chomsky's views on the matter. This disagreement has been widely publicized.

While Clarke's descriptions are original (to put it mildly), most of his criticisms are rather conventional.

All structuralists are positivists, for example. They are guilty of arbitrariness, circularity, neglect of the context, empty formalism and contempt for the evidence. They construct "ideal objects" rather than study reality. If these were truly the characteristic features of structuralists, Clarke himself would be the most structuralist of them all.

Clarke, however, seems to think of himself as a Marxist (though he pays little attention to previous Marxist discussions of structuralism). With a sudden and massive injection of Marxian and Marxist quotes in the last five pages of his book, he first recalls that the Utopian socialism of the nineteenth century was "aspiring to the petit-bourgeois Utopia of a society of independent petty commodity producers" and then argues: "The philosophies of Sartre and Lévi-Strauss represent, in a sense, a twentieth-century version of this same Utopianism... However, in the era of monopoly capitalism there is little prospect of a restoration of petty commodity production. Sartre and Lévi-Strauss can only offer, therefore, a contemplative and impotent critique..."

They are "unable either to offer a diagnosis of the evils of the existing society, or to indicate any means of changing it". Lévi-Strauss would, no doubt, agree.

The relevance of Clarke's discussion to a better understanding of structuralism is not immediately apparent, but, as Lévi-Strauss himself has argued, all versions of a myth should be taken into account. Clarke's whimsical version of the myth of structuralism does not really offer a diagnosis of the evils of the existing ideology, nor does it indicate any means of changing it, but it does constitute a glaring symptom.

## The verbalization of violence

By Christopher Norris

**ERIC GANS:**  
*The Origin of Language*  
A Formal Theory of Representation  
314pp. University of California Press. £12.  
0 520 04202 6

It is a fair prediction that most of those to whom this book is addressed – linguists, philosophers, anthropologists – will judge it to contain hardly a single meaningful proposition, let alone "a consistent argument that has persuasive power". This description of it, quoted on the jacket, is by Paul de Man, who goes on to speak of a "lively mind" at work on a "somewhat aberrant scheme". Enough to suggest that the "consistency" and "persuasiveness" in question are pretty remote from the traditional virtues and more in line with de Man's own trouble-making theory of linguistic abstraction and duplicity.

And so it turns out, with Eric Gans pursuing his arguments very much under the aegis of French post-structuralism and the kind of linguistic speculation opened up by Derrida's grammatology. That Derrida treats of the quest for origins as a chronic, and inoperative delusion – a gesture of complicity with Western metaphysics – is for Gans no embarrassment but a welcome, paradoxical spur to reflection. He sets out to develop a full-blown mythology of language and its violent ritual beginnings, a "theory of representation" grounded in a specific ritual scene. Only thus, according to Gans, can thought be provided with a content or sufficiently real basis for the struggle divagations of metaphor so relentlessly tracked down by Derrida. Otherwise deconstruction remains a species of "empty" formalism, alert to the problems and para-

doxes of structuralist method but unable to find any referential ground for its own proliferating discourse.

Gans develops the idea of René Girard, that language arose from the act of ritual sacrifice which first gave form to man's inchoate desire, for symbolic mastery and meaning. This drama produced the complex pattern by which discourse evolved from an undifferentiated phase of tribal communion. The sacrificial victim became, as it were, a sublimated focus for all those aggressive and self-preserving instincts which had to find symbolic outlet if the violence was not to be endlessly repeated. Language displaced the sacrificial scene, first into ritualized gestures of enactment, and then into structures which preserved the vital relations and boundaries of group identity.

Gans accepts the main thrust of Girard's hypothesis, but offers what he thinks is a more specific and workable account of the genesis of "representation". He postulates a moment of crisis when each member of the tribe is tempted to seize and appropriate the victim's remains, only to be held in check by the instinctive fear that he may become the next victim. This communal holding-back is a source of reciprocal awareness and a founding stage in the progress from actual to mediated scenes of violence. "The first linguistic act", as Gans puts it, "is constituted by a collective abortive gesture of appropriation." It reveals the possibility that objects may be designated, sacralized, or rendered significant – without danger of violence.

From this point Gans moves on to a full-scale account of the genesis of language, conceived as a series of mimetic displacements, or "specific mediations" leading from an actual murder to the realm of symbolic substitution. Violence, he argues, is intrinsic to the instinct for mimesis, which can only be channelled and controlled by the forms of discursive

representation. The structures of language evolve through stages of defensive adaptation to a primal "mimetic conflict" which cannot be resolved by any other means. Gans's claim – as against Derrida – is that some such hypothesis is needed to arrest the infinite regress of a theory which rejects all notions of "origin" as merely metaphysical. Where Derrida denounces the ubiquitous thematics of origin and presence, Gans on the contrary sees them as a necessary delusion, a deep reserve of cultural myth against the threatening forces of disruption. His theory amounts to a bridge between functionalist anthropology and the powerful but "ungrounded" rhetoric which Derrida brings to his demystification of texts. Gans puts forward his hypothesis as a means of grounding linguistic "presence" and representation while yet admitting the force of Derrida's arguments. It is, he claims, a mode of explanation which "returns anthropological tension to a concept that has simply been taken for granted or, in post-Cartesian thought, internalized as the self-reflection of the subject."

Gans can thus be seen – if his case holds up – as turning the tables on Derrida by giving a further, anthropological twist to the rhetoric of deconstruction. Despite its sceptical vigilance, deconstruction still remains captive to a theory devoid of significant content and based on the most plenitude of meaning. Such, according to Gans, is the inevitable end-point of all philosophies which "even today fail to respect their anthropological origin."

It is not always clear precisely what status is being claimed for the ritualist hypothesis. At times it is offered, as the only "functional" solution to the paradoxes engendered by reflection on language and origins. Elsewhere Gans seems willing to treat it as a generative fiction, a result (as de Man might say) of the

dialectical interplay between thought and the self-proposed objects of thought. Thus Gans preempts the charge that he is arguing in a circle by claiming that his theory necessarily involves a convergence of themes, a telescoped perspective wherein the "origin of language" is inseparable from "the present-day crisis of cultural discourse". On the other hand, he is anxious to dissociate this view from any "weak" hermeneutic or relativist account which would surrender the claim to "functional" validity. As Gans would have it, representation "guarantees its own genesis".

What Gans attempts to show is the twofold process by which language both transcends its origins, developing ever more complex resources, and at the same time conserves its more "primitive" structures as a tacit background to communication. Three major phases – the "ostensive", "imperative" and "declarative" – are defined in broadly functional terms and then shown to evolve through a sequence of transformations which lead from the primitive (context-dependent) to the elaborate form of reason. The ostensive in the sense of being firmly tied to the here-and-now "presence" of the designated object. As the process develops an articulate structure, building up to the forms of propositional statement, so the ties of word and object are progressively loosened, and language achieves a relative autonomy. From this point of view, Gans argues, the "grammaticality" of a linguistic form can be defined as "its degree of self-containment or context-freeness, considered as an intentional model of reality".

Gans produces some powerfully suggestive ideas and analogies in the course of this ambitious argument. Most striking perhaps is the chapter on "Dialogue and Discourse", which tackles the relation between temporal sequence, as preserved in narrative, or "diagonal" structures, and

those forms of "de-temporalized" discourse which stand at the furthest remove from ritual origins. The propositions of logic or mathematics are seen as approaching a zero degree of referential content where the process of mimetic enactment and mediation gives way to a formalized (and finally tautologous) mode of reasoning. As Gans describes it, the cathartic structure of discourse has effectively been liberated from its self-reflective cultural subject-matter to construct formally reversible models of any object of potential interest.

Gans's whole programme is open to various criticisms, including some of those most frequently brought against Derrida. Deconstruction must perforce operate with concepts and strategies of argument borrowed from the tradition it seeks to dismantle, and bearing along with them a baggage of residual metaphysics. Gans is likewise constrained to pursue his own argument through a mode of explanatory discourse which can only gesture – by fiat or hypothesis – at those other, sublimated forms which it strives to resurrect. Far from ignoring this problem, Gans puts it forward as a motif for development and a further "grounding" paradox. The discourse of the human sciences, he writes, "stands in an ambiguous relation to both temporalized and de-temporalized discourse, a relation which must be clarified in order to make clear its status as a hermeneutic for our own theory". In the end it is hard to see how "theory" can break with the kind of self-sustaining critique which Gans himself defines as the "first characteristic of modernity". One can only be struck by the extreme disparity between Gans's (on the face of it) far-fetched ritualist hypothesis and his subtly qualified meditations on dialogue and discourse. All the same his arguments have a speculative range and energy which go a long way toward justifying their eccentric premises.

## Searching out the secrets

By R. J. Hollingdale

**HANS MAYER:**  
*Thomas Mann*  
533pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.  
3 518 03633 5  
**KÄTE HAMBURGER**  
*Thomas Manns biblisches Werk*  
270pp. Munich: Nymphenburger.  
3 485 01862 7

In the spring of the year 1954, the scholar and critic Hans Mayer was having lunch with Thomas Mann. Herr Mayer had four years previously published, under the title *Thomas Mann: Werk und Entwicklung*, a large volume of critical essays which had been read by its subject with mixed feelings, though also with a considerable degree of admiration. Now the two were meeting in Zürich to discuss the details of a collected edition of Mann's writings which Mayer was preparing and which would, if all went well, appear the following year in celebration of the author's eightieth birthday.

Between the appearance of Mayer's critical compendium and the meeting in Zürich Mann had published what was to prove to be his last completed story: the novella *Die Betrogene* (later beautifully translated into English by Willard Trask as *The Black Swan*) – a work which had had a mixed reception from critics and public, some of whom had not hesitated to say that they felt repelled by it. Certain tendencies in the Master which his admirers, while not denying, preferred not to dwell on – for instance a penchant for a medical explicitness not obviously required by the narrative, seemed here to be displayed almost in the manner of a challenge.

Herr Mayer, however, was not among these fainthearts: he had enjoyed *Die Betrogene* and had said so; and the fact had given Mann much pleasure. Now, "bei Tisch", the conversation turned to the criticism the work had received, and Mayer began to expatiate on the qualities and characteristics of the story as he saw them, and upon its meaning. That it constituted a counterpart to the much earlier novella, *Der Tod in Venedig*, was, he asserted, plainly apparent; though what was not so apparent was why the later story should take place precisely in Düsseldorf. As a Rhinelander, Mayer was intrigued by this circumstance. That both stories were in some way associated with Goethe had struck him at once, especially in the case of *Die Betrogene* where the relationship between body and soul, the physical and the psychical, was as integral to the story as it was in Goethe's novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Mayer had proceeded thus far when a change in the atmosphere stopped him in his tracks. Thomas Mann, himself, had suddenly frozen into immobility. "I can", he said in an icy tone, "see no connection whatever between my work and Goethe!"

This scene is narrated by Mayer, with all modesty and good-humour, at the end of the recollections of Mann which open this new volume of critical essays. Without intending to do so, he had given Mann to believe that he had grasped that *Die Betrogene* contained a secret and had divined what it was; and Mann had reacted with what, though Mayer does not use the word, looks very like panic. The nature of this secret is disclosed 400 pages later, in an essay called "Der Tod in Düsseldorf": a closely argued and absorbing piece of literary detection. It is not necessary to repeat or summarize it here – if the reader wants to know why the novelist panicked (or seemed to do so) when he thought Mayer had guessed the secret of *Die Betrogene*, he will have to read the essay *Thomas Mann* with interest in the way in which it exemplifies in a small compass what appears to be Mayer's two basic propositions with regard to Mann.

The first is that, for Mann, the external world existed only, or

almost only, as a source of future literature: "all love, together with all suffering, was taken in earnest by him above all as his own experience of love and pain. All experience, however, had to be transformed into speech and text: that is the harsh rule of the game. Nothing could remain 'unexpressed'". This contention seems to possess great explanatory power. It would explain why even his shorter works seem, through the weight of their vocabulary, longer than they are; his ambitious attempts to translate the world of phenomena into a world of words. It would also explain the well-known biographical fact of Mann's "ironic reserve" in his dealings with the outer world, and especially with that part of it associated with his profession of writer: he took seriously only (or almost only) his own experience, and then only insofar as it could be put to literary use, and hardly at all the objects that produced it.

Mayer's second proposition is that "there is hardly an author of contemporary literature in whom there seems to exist so great a divergence between the course of his outer life and that of his inner" than Thomas Mann. His bourgeois existence is in conflict with the theme of his works to an extent to which there can be few parallels. No one familiar with Mann's oeuvre can disagree with this judgment, or fail to see in it the origin of all those conflicts and comings-together of antitheses which constitute the heart of so many of his plots.

As an essay in the employment of these principles for the explication of one of Mann's stories, "Der Tod in Düsseldorf" could hardly be bettered. But it also possesses a further value as an exemplary piece of Mann criticism: it carries to an extreme a tendency – one might almost say a tradition – in the study and evaluation of Mann which I would like to suggest has, precisely in this essay and in this book as a whole, now run its course.

As Nobel prizewinner and preeminent "great writer" whose novels were invariably compared with those of the masters of the nineteenth century; as an internationally known figure whose external appearance was of an almost excessive correctness and called to mind that of a prime minister or the president of a bank rather than that of a writer; and as, during the Nazi era, the quasi-official ambassador of a liberal and humane Germany in the outside world had to continue to believe in the face of so much evidence to the contrary – as all this, Thomas Mann represented an irresistible temptation to the psychological miners and under-miners among the students of literature. The author of *Death in Venice* could hardly be as he seemed. It was as though Gladstone had claimed to be the author of *My Secret Life* or Hemingway had admitted to the authorship of *Peter Pan*. The contrast between author and work was too great; and since the work could not be other than it was, the author must be other than he seemed to be. There thus came forth a stream of criticism of Mann of which Mayer's "Der Tod in Düsseldorf" is the latest tributary: a kind of literary detective work which leads to an unmasking. I do not deny the fascination of this undertaking and I have participated in it myself; but perhaps it has now been carried on for long enough.

Mann has been dead for twenty-six years and has long been considered a great European writer, so perhaps the reading of his works in search of clues as to the character of their author might by now be relegated to the margin or banished from the page altogether. That there is something of Wagner in Alberich may be taken as certain, and some of us imagine we know what it is; but a contemporary critic who occupied himself overmuch with such unridiculous would not have much to tell us about the *Rheingold*.

These reflections aside, Mayer's

excellent and enjoyable study invites one to return to Mann: not to the by now historical human figure – though Mayer has much of interest to say about him – but rather to *Buddenbrooks*, *The Magic Mountain*, *Joseph, Dr Faustus* and *Fella Krull*, to Aschenbach in Venice and Lotte in Weimar. Yet there is one odd feature about it, for which Mayer's explanation fails to convince me. The book is in four parts: *Erinnerung* (recollections of Mann written in 1980), *Werk und Entwicklung* (a republication of the book of 1950), *Fir und Wider* (further essays written between 1965 and 1980), and *Die Tagebücher* (reviews of Mann's Diaries as they appeared from 1977 onwards). Parts one, three and four are straightforward collections of writings originally produced separately; it is the second part, which constitutes a good half of the book, which contains the oddity.

Mayer explains that, in reprinting it from the original edition of 1950, he has made stylistic improvements where he thought they were needed, but has left his early opinions intact, "even where the author today convinced he was wrong" (my italics). This seems a very peculiar thing to do, and it is not made less peculiar by the circumstances in which the original edition appeared – as Mayer reminds us, in East Berlin "while Stalin was still alive", with all that phrase may be thought to encapsulate as to the possibilities of free expression. Why reprint thirty years later opinions one now regards as misguided – not merely allow them to continue in print, but to restore them to life after oblivion has (one would have thought mercifully) taken them? Mayer claims that he has engaged a "Prozess der dialektischen Auseinandersetzung", but is not what we are offered, which is differing opinions by the same author, the earlier of which he says he now repudiates.

The two long studies – of *Joseph and his Brothers* and *Das Gesetz* – which constitute Käte Hamburger's *Thomas Manns biblisches Werk* are also not new: the *Gesetz* study first appeared in 1963, and the *Joseph* study originated as far back as 1945. Both are quite different in character from the kind of criticism so well represented by Mayer: in essence the task they undertake is to discover how the texts under consideration came into being – how certain familiar passages in the Old Testament were transformed into the novel and the story.

The difficulty of the *Joseph* cycle has always seemed to me the tremendous discrepancy between the number of words required by the author of Genesis to tell the story of Joseph and his brothers and the number required by Thomas Mann. For Mann makes it clear – and nowhere more so than at the very end of his enormous work – that what he offers is supposed to be read as a story (and not as a learned exegesis of the Biblical story); in that case one wonders how it acquired its truly prodigious length. *Thomas Manns biblisches Werk* helps towards a solution of this problem by showing, among other things, the extent to which Mann establishes a relationship between the events of the Biblical story and the events of his own time – a procedure which necessitates expansion. (One example is the connection between Joseph's administration of the economy of Egypt and Roosevelt's New Deal).

*German Poetic Realism* (150pp, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 8057 6447 X) by Clifford Albrecht Bernd is one of the "Twayne's World Author Series, A Survey of the World's Literature". The book covers the period from 1848, when Julian Schmidt opened his campaign to promote poetic realism, to 1894 and the publication of the sixteenth edition of Scherer's *Deutscher Dichterwald*. There are chapters on "The Genesis of German Poetic Realism", "The Novella", "The Lyric", "The Novel" and "The Recession of German Poetic Realism".

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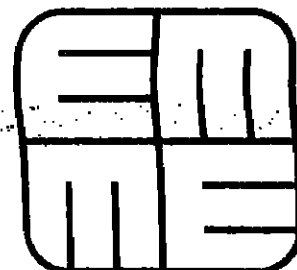
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## Consumptive communities

By Masolino d'Amico

GESUALDO BUFALINO:  
Diceria dell'umore  
196pp. Palermo: Sellerio. L4,500.SALVATORE SATTA:  
La veranda  
187pp. Milan: Adelphi. L7,000.

Both *Diceria dell'umore* and *La veranda* have youthful narrators who spend time in TB clinics and both survive to tell the story. They fall in love with doomed women who respond with passion but without illusion. There are also striking, if superficial, similarities between the books' authors: both are, or were, islanders – one Sicilian, the other Sardinian – and both latecomers to the literary scene; both, moreover, have been favourably compared to Lampedusa.

Leonardo Sciascia first discovered and endorsed the sixty-year-old Gesualdo Bufalino, a teacher in a provincial school in Sicily. Salvatore Satta, who was born in 1902 and died in 1975, was well known in his lifetime as a jurist. His magnificent novel, *Il giorno del giudizio*, which he wrote in the last four years of his life and which appeared posthumously, was originally published by the same large academic firm which had handled his legal works, and it was largely ignored by the general public. Adelphi rescued it from oblivion, and launched it as the major discovery of 1979. The recently published *La veranda* was written at a much earlier date; the manuscript had been entered for a literary prize in the early 1930s, but it had failed to impress the jury. At least one member of the jury though, the writer Marino Moretti, considered it to be a sort of Italian *Magic Mountain*, and he bitterly complained of what he felt to be the excessive squeamishness of the Italian public.

at the time. But *La veranda* remained unpublished and was considered lost, until it was recently discovered in a folder of legal documents.

These two authors' personalities, however, are poles apart. Stylistically, Bufalino's book is as rich and as elegant as a *cassata alla siciliana*; from the deep, morbid colour of the blood which gushes endlessly up from the characters' afflicted lungs, it might be described as one uninterrupted purple patch. A consumptive priest says:

The wine for Mass is black, a strong Salaparuta wine they give me in the kitchen. A dense wine, from the veins of a Saracen god. It works in no time. I realise that in the vestry, when I throw it up, after a coughing fit, into the four corners of my napkin.

And when the narrator muses about his love:

With a sour, horrible stab of lust I thought of her cooing limbs, of her spittings, sweatings, perspiration, tears and exudations... of her triumphant haemoptysis.

With its population of soldiers home from the war – it is 1946 – the sanatorium of La Rocca seems like a condemned outpost in a hostile land. A lonely, dictatorial, chess-playing head surgeon administers to the rituals of death. One by one the inmates fall, mowed down by consumption, or maybe by the sheer, Keatsian voluptuousness of that nocturnal world, where each moment is so loaded with sensations of secrecy and extinction, that life – unselfconscious life – is simply impossible. The surgeon himself is not exempt from the common fate; only the hero somehow emerges from the slow Totentanz, after a futile escape with a doubly desperate girl (a dancer in the final stages of the illness, who has also been cut off from normal people as the former mistress of a Nazi), whose destiny one finds all the more moving for the self-centred description we get of it from the

macho-inclined protagonist.

Satta's hospital is in the North of Italy and its atmosphere could hardly provide a stronger contrast. Horseplay, practical jokes and locker-room humour take the place of the baroque contemplation of death in Bufalino's clinic on the Conca d'Oro. Here surnames are abolished, and the inmates refer to one another only by the place they come from. They live as stock characters, each one's individual foibles being eagerly seized upon and magnified by the others. Tensing is incessant; as in war, these men seem to find strength in a stream of coarse, uninspired jokes about their predicament. The few "visitors" from the outside world are lugubrious: an unspeakably sluttish prostitute; or three idiot peasants who come in once a week, and who entertain the patients by exposing themselves to their jeers. Most patients come and go, but one, the destitute Melanzana, unable to leave or to die, has become a sort of custodian, or genie of the place.

With hindsight it is easy to liken this angry vision of a microcosm of sick people, who are at once crass, provincial, and bent on mutual bickering rather than on trying to be constructive, and escape their fate, to the sinister Italy of the time, with its petty selfishness and intimations of a common doom. But it must also be said that *La veranda* contains a message of hope in the person of the protagonist, who has little to say for himself, but who emerges as an engagingly matter-of-fact young man, determined to survive, as laconic and practical as his prose. He tends to stand apart, and regrets this at times; but he is capable of observing things and people without acrimony, and above all, of learning his lesson. With the same hindsight, we know of course that he will graduate from the experience of the sanatorium into a "doer", and not another useless "fidler". Only at the end of a fruitful life will he sit back and write another, and this time a great book.

## Motorway madness

By Patrick McCarthy

RENE BELLETTO:

*Le Revenant*  
415pp. Paris: Hachette

Three years ago René Belletto published a novel called *Livre d'histoire* in which he started numerous stories, interrupted himself and finished none of them. It was a promising book but, as one read it, one wished that Belletto would let himself go and give free rein to his flair for story-telling and to his wild sense of humour. *Livre d'histoire* displayed the extreme self-awareness that characterizes recent French fiction: it was very definitely an example of the not so new novel. *Le Revenant*, however, is an uninhibited piece of story-telling written in rich, playful language. It should win Belletto many new readers and it must surely be the outstanding French novel of the year.

It contains three interwoven tales. The first is a detective story full of Latin American drug dealers, casual murders, anonymous machine-guns, miraculous escapes and corpses stuffed into hastily-dug graves on building-sites. Unashamedly melodramatic, Belletto sends us hurtling on a chase from Barcelona to Lyon and on to Sicily, where the denouement includes secret tunnels and underground explosions.

Of the places depicted Lyon is the most vivid. Indeed Belletto has compensated Lyon for the neglect which centuries of French writers have shown towards it. *Le Revenant* describes the grim working-class suburbs where children play in the wasteland surrounding the skyscraper blocks of flats; instead of the sun-Lyon is lit by the eternal flame that arises from this Feyzin chemical works. This is the setting for Belletto's

secret tale: the saga of a Spanish family which fled to France in the 1930s. He depicts their dubious French, their complex family ties and their nostalgia for Madrid. Like the detective story, this could have been a book in itself and Belletto has shown that he might, if he wished, write a traditional realist novel.

Instead, he has enveloped the secret tunnels and the Feyzin flame in a greater mystery. *Le Revenant* begins after the death of the narrator's wife, which is never explained, and it ends without telling us what the precious object, for which the gangsters are massacring one another, really is. In Belletto's detective story there are no neat solutions because murder is only one part of a greater evil. Stunned grief at the death of his wife and son drives the narrator to take up crime, which liberates him from the near madness into which he has fallen. The origin of evil lies deep in the family bonds and especially in the parent-child relationship. The heroine Maria goes back to Sicily to confront the memory of her father killing her mother. But Belletto wisely imposes no Freudian schemes on his writing and his third tale is a metaphysical mystery-story in which all the characters are pursued by an ineradicable, inexplicable fear.

This may seem gloomy but the narrator, Marc, tells his tales with comic verve. Fear takes the form of a plate of sea-food from which an octopus-eye glares accusingly up at him. Every time he stays in a hotel the hot-water system breaks down and he has only to put on a shirt for it to crumple and soil. Most food causes him to vomit – nausea plays an important role in *Le Revenant* – so that chef-smokes and is happiest drinking at seventy miles an hour through the Lyon traffic. Much of the novel is spent in traffic-jams and on motorways: when Marc speeds down to Sicily it never occurs to him to stop and look at the Italian countryside

and he is impressed only by the frenzied Roman taxi-drivers.

The real hero of *Le Revenant* may be not Marc but his Peugeot 403. This is how he describes it:

It was an enormous, disgusting, evil-smelling monstrosity which looked as if it had dragged itself here to die... you could tell it had started out as a Peugeot 403 but the ravages of age and dozens of accidents, followed by brutal repairs or by no repairs at all, had transformed it into a machine on wheels, impossible to classify, unique in a horrible way, with an offensive odour and lots of details depicting American flags, nudies and mountain peaks.

Such passages abound because Marc flees from his fear into comic rhetoric. He loves to play with language: his narrative is sprinkled with deformed Spanish and Italian words which he introduces characters who never speak and others who cannot hear. Belletto has not forgotten the techniques of the New Novel and Marc keeps reminding us that he does not understand the chase in which he is caught up. This leaves him all the freer to invent, and Belletto's imagination never flags. At the end of the book Marc is speeding down yet another motorway and who knows what catastrophes may await him.

*Italy: Society in Crisis/Society in Transformation* by John Fraser (307pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £10.95, 0 7100 0771 X) is divided into two parts: the first part deals with "Crisis Theory, Structure and Conjunction" and "Modernism, the Second Part with, among other subjects, "The Italian Crisis: Change of Direction", "Social Disintegration and Adaptation", "The Armed Party", "Strategy for Decline: The Economy" and "The Modern State in Italy and its Critics".

MURIEL ST CLARE BYRNE (Editor):  
The Lisle Letters  
6 volumes, 744pp. 724pp. 650pp.  
562pp. 792pp. 480pp.University of Chicago Press. £125  
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0 226 08801 4

In May 1540 Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, Henry VIII's Lord Deputy in Calais, was enjoying a period of leave in London. His family had high hopes. Lisle appeared to be in good standing with his nephew the King. After seven years of grinding responsibility in England's most important military command, there was talk of a less demanding but better paid post at court, perhaps, too, of promotion to an earldom. Suddenly he was called before the Council and consigned to the Tower, where he stayed for two years without trial, apparently forgotten in a flurry of more urgent business. At last Henry gave the order for his release, but Lisle died before leaving the Tower. "Too much rejoicing" at clearing his name was, it was thought, the cause of death.

Lisle's story would normally rate an interesting footnote in Tudor history, and perhaps provide material for a romantic novel. As the acknowledged bastard of Edward IV, he played a minor but honourable role at the court of Henry VIII. His arrest was an incident in the dizzying struggle for power between Thomas Cromwell and his conservative opponents which resulted in Cromwell's own arrest (followed quickly by his execution) coming less than two months after he had been created Earl of Essex. Arrest on suspicion of treason involved the confiscation of papers. Lisle seems to have been a hoarder; or perhaps he was just less quick off the mark than his contemporaries. The Crown therefore netted a mass of papers for the seven years of Lisle's time in Calais which ranged from official correspondence to purely private, family letters.

The Lisle papers have remained with the Crown. In the nineteenth century, with the establishment of the Public Record Office, they were calendared in that remarkable and indispensable compendium, the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, and their contents became familiar to scholars; although, since the arrangement of *Letters and Papers* was chronological, one carried away little distinct impression of the Lisle material, though little of it seemed very exciting. Of course, they could have been his by his agents in London found his way into the standard accounts. Scholars were aware of the private material, though little of it seemed very exciting. Of course, they could have resorted to the PRO where the Lisle Papers formed a separate class, to consult the originals. Except to check up when the *Letters and Papers* summary was too bald, they seem not to have done so in any systematic way.

Some fifty years ago Miss Byrne decided to produce a large-scale edition of the Lisle Papers. The task itself was a daunting one; so was that of getting a publisher to take it on. After many vicissitudes they have triumphantly appeared. A barrage of publicity has followed, much of it directed towards the personality of its now octogenarian author. I cannot remember a serious work of Tudor scholarship featuring so extensively in the colour supplements, or earning a spot on BBC Radio 4.

Was the effort worth it? My first reaction was that it was not, and that the publicity was overdone. Some reporters evidently believed that Miss Byrne had "discovered" the Lisle Letters, and indeed that she had previously "discovered" the letters of Henry VIII, of which she had produced an edition. *Letters and Papers* did after all summarize them, often at considerable length, and scholars could always consult the originals in the PRO; and microfilm could make them as readily available in Los Angeles and Canberra as in Chancery Lane.

Working slowly through Miss Byrne's volumes over several weeks, I have been won over. The job was not merely

worth doing; the result is a major scholarly event. And this in spite of certain irritations caused by Miss Byrne's idiosyncratic methods as editor.

The Letters comprise, on the one hand, drafts of outgoing letters from Calais; and inward, everything from official council letters on affairs of state, to letters from humble estate officials, and duty letters from Lady Lisle's children. Rather surprisingly, given the bulk of the six printed volumes, they are not complete; some 1,677 only of about three thousand originals. (A clearer explanation of the criteria for selection would have been useful). They are supplemented by a large number of other documents, interspersed in the text, or printed in confusingly numbered appendices. They are given in modern spelling and with modern punctuation, though there are also some literal transcripts; each volume also has photographs of selected letters. They are embedded in a running commentary, usually in batches of six or so. The chapters are arranged chronologically, though from time to time the sequence is broken to concentrate on a particular topic, such as the education of Lady Lisle's children. This is defensible, indeed, necessary; but since most of the letters deal with more than one topic, the reader is thrown back on a system of cross-referencing and indexing which is often somewhat haphazard. The arrangement of the commentary is also quirky, and the reader sometimes needs a good deal of patience before tracking down the information he needs.

The commentary is sometimes discursive, and in tone rather costly knowing. The physical characteristics of the Angevin kings, Miss Byrne believes, "have survived in generation after generation, and are still recognizable today". We are invited to think of the quarrelsome Jane Basset in terms of a tweedy spinster, "still overindulgent with her dogs and still liable to regard the vicar as her dearest enemy". There are a number of factual errors, especially in the ascription of offices in the biographical notes. There is an occasional howler (John of Leiden besieged in Leiden, instead of Munster) and the odd remark (Henry VIII inheriting a "bankrupt kingdom") which reminds us how long the work has been in gestation.

Miss Byrne's own work, indeed, seems to have been completed in 1967. There are references to books published up to 1965. Unfortunately, Miss Byrne was not able to make use of Dr Michael Bush's 1966 paper about the suits over land in which Lisle was involved with Edward Seymour, the future Protector Somerset. I find Dr Bush's account clearer than Miss Byrne's; he also makes some vital comments which she has missed. She was, however, able to make use of Prys Morgan's knowledge of the illuminating Welsh manuscript chronicle compiled by Elis Gruffudd, a soldier of the Calais garrison under Lisle. Extracts from Gruffudd in translation have appeared here and there over the years, trickling tantalizingly into the consciousness of Tudor historians; an edition would be invaluable for those of us not up to tackling a sixteenth-century Welsh source in manuscript form.

Miss Byrne grasps visitors to the Lisle mansion firmly by the arm, insists that they see things in the right order, which is her order, and that they imbibe every possible piece of relevant information, along with a generous ration of *obiter dicta* on the world at large. As a result, they do get to know fairly well, a few individuals; and develop a passing acquaintance with several dozen more. Intimate knowledge of Tudor Englishmen is not easily come by; the outstanding example is the More family, and in that case it is distorted by hagiographic selection. That knowledge can only come from a long, slow trudge through a mass of materials, much of it (though Miss Byrne would deny it) in itself rather tedious; her brisk, no-nonsense tone helps to jolly one along through the duller patches.

Lord and Lady Lisle were both mid-

dle-aged. Miss Byrne argues, not I find convincingly, that Lisle was born early in Edward IV's reign, and that he was therefore in his seventies. (Edward's energies in his later years, she rather quaintly thinks, were monopolized by the Queen and by Jane Shore). Lisle had previously been married to Elizabeth Grey, Baroness Lisle in her own right, abruptly widowed by Henry VIII's execution of his father's minister, Edmund Dudley. Lisle had two daughters by this marriage, he also acquired some stepchildren, one of them John Dudley, already into his thirties and a well-established figure at court when the correspondence gets under way. Lady Lisle, born Honor Grenville, had been married to Sir John Basset. She had seven children by this marriage, their upbringing providing much of the domestic interest of the Letters, as well as two Basset step-daughters. The Lisles had no children of their own. Hopes that she was pregnant with a Plantagenet heir in 1537 were cruelly disappointed.

Miss Byrne has acquired a soft spot for Lisle himself, and fiercely defends him from historians who have depicted him as a bumbling incompetent. It may be unfair to blame him for all the many of them beyond his control. But he was clearly inadequate for a position of great responsibility. Lady Lisle and John Hussey, his confidential secretary, point him, not always very tactfully, in the right direction. Hussey is frequently exasperated by his master's incompetence; left to translate a royal promise by word of mouth into the definite grant of a specific estate or an annuity by months of hard graft in the corridors of power. Lisle gets maneuvered by Cromwell into promising the sale of some of his wife's property; back in Calais he dares not tell her what he has done, leaving her to find out when she sets off to see Cromwell on her own account. Lisle also brings trouble on himself by signing documents he does not understand. When Hussey does bring negotiations to a successful conclusion, he spells out in painful detail the thank-you letters Lisle should write, and what he should say in them. How Henry VIII came to entrust Lisle with such a strategically important command remains a mystery.

Lady Lisle is a much more formidable character, interfering in her husband's business (official and private) but keeping her own, not surprisingly, under tight personal control. It is Hussey, however, who steals the show. He was a by-word at court for his pertinacity; without which Lisle's affairs would have been in an even worse mess than they were. There is no doubt of his real affection for the

Lisles (and of theirs for him), or of his pain when he is unjustly rebuked. He is an excellent raconteur, guarded in his comments on the news, but direct, frequently sardonic, about individuals. "The King's Majesty should have [some plate]; I trust Mr Cromwell will condescend to the same".

There are a host of memorable moments. John Cheriton, a Devon squire, seeing Pope Clement VII at Pisa with "two the fairest women to his wives that I ever saw out of England", attended by a larger guard than that provided for the Holy Sacrament, gives us an insight into English attitudes to Rome in the year of the Boleyn marriage; all in a splendid Devon accent which comes through the clumsy orthography. Anne of Cleves, delayed at Calais on her way to meet Henry VIII, shows herself already impatient of the formality which English royalty has to endure at meals. Lord Edmund Howard declines a dinner invitation with an excuse (Lady Lisle's remedy against the stone has "made me such a pisser that I dare not this day go abroad") which deserves an anthology place.

Much more important, however, is the light that the Lisle letters throw on the attitudes, assumptions, and values

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of certain Tudor Englishmen and Englishwomen; and this is the real justification for the publication. The study of attitudes, of *mentalities*, requires patience, the pondering of evidence, a good deal of reading between the lines; and for that reason it requires the evidence to be readily available in a usable form for appraisal and for re-appraisal, as the Paston Letters have been for a century. Tudor letters, after all, need a good deal of interpretation. Leading figures of the period, the Lisles among them, normally used amanuenses; when the amanuensis was John Husee, he probably supplied not only the form but much of the content of the letter. Nor in fact can Husee's own letters be taken at face value given the danger of commenting on current politics.

On religion, Lisle himself was rather down-to-earth, rather bewildered; distrustful reformers as liable to stir up trouble, but prepared to go along with whatever the King required, seizing the opportunity of acquiring church lands as they became available. (Whithersley's having to displace the corpse of the first Lady Lisle while converting Titchfield Abbey into a house seems not to have troubled him). One could read a certain religious insensitivity in Lisle's request to Cromwell "to send home Mr Porter, for there is great lack of him, as knoweth the most blessed Trinity, who send your lordship continuance of health". Lady Lisle was more conventionally pious, even determinedly conservative in her devotions. Even so a priest could be

commended as "very meet" to do her service, because of his talents as gardener, secretary and musician. The most rewarding individual for analysis could be Husee; on the face of it the clear-sighted man of business, he nonetheless recommends the consolations of Providence to his master and mistress in what seem to be more than conventional formulae, of a rather Protestant tone.

None of the correspondents display the slightest interest in the occult, unless one includes the French doctor who prescribed medicines to be taken at full moon; significant, perhaps, given current theories of the ubiquity of such interests in the sixteenth century. But that may merely reflect the generally unintellectual atmosphere of the Lisles' circle; although the ever-surprising Husee quotes Latin tags. Writing was plainly a chore; Lady Lisle, asking her husband to add a few lines in his own hand, disclaims any intention of wanting him "to take so much pain as to write to me of your own hand in or for all your business". Many correspondents, however, once embarked, seem unable to restrain themselves from the pleasures of description.

Reviewers have seized on the evident affection between Lord and Lady Lisle, "mine own sweetheart", "my very heart root and entirely beloved bedfellow", and opposed it to some of the harshest generalizations about Tudor marriage. But the Lisles married, of course, as widow and widower,

not as young people at the behest of their parents. They saw the marriages of their children as, inevitably, a business arrangement, but not entirely so. Husee considered that "upon liking" a marriage might be arranged between Clement Philpot, "a proper young man and like to be the heir" and Philippa Bassett; the qualification was evidently real, since the marriage did not take place. (Although Philpot entered Lisle's service, with disastrous results.) And was it just a shrewd property calculation which prompted the marriage of Lisle's daughter to Lady Lisle's son?

Most of the political material is familiar from the *Letters and Papers* version. Nevertheless, following Husee's footsteps as he pursues Lisle's business day-by-day at court underlines the frustration of life without appointments diaries or, in the modern sense, a secretarial system; the interminable "waiting" hoping to catch the great man's eye, the endless problems caused by vague or contradictory oral promises by the King needing to be sorted out at a lower level. "For of a truth, the suits of the Court are very prolixious", Husee commented. Gifts, of course, lubricate the system; good French wine, wild boar, and quails from Calais, while on their side the Lisles were always eager for English venison. Husee was often in a tizzy about gifts: the quails were too lean, or Cromwell had his eye on "my lady's sparrow, which I know well her ladyship would in no way part withal". Busi-

ness was also helped by spies in other people's households; Husee's contacts in Cromwell's house, for instance, got him advance sight of a stiff rebuke being sent to one of Lisle's subordinates in Calais.

There is a temptation to go on citing incidents from the Letters. On a political level, an important contribution is the filling out of the Calais dimension to Professor Elton's analysis of the fall of Cromwell. A good deal could be said about education and the search for suitable preferment for children. The Bassett girls spent some time in French noble households, while young James Bassett was enrolled, unsuccessfully, in the Collège de Navarre at the age of ten. The Letters do, in fact, contain a good deal which would be worth the attention of French historians.

Miss Byrne is keen to direct the literary scholar as well as the historian to the Letters. In general, she argues, the Letters display "vivid, vigorous and pleasant writing" in contrast to the more stilted style of self-consciously literary works. "The people, in the main, wrote as they talked"; even in dictated letters where, she suggests, punctuation indicates the speaker's pauses and so allows the natural rhythm of speech to be captured. There is certainly a vivid immediacy, a sense of adventure in the use of words, and a delight in rhythm in the Letters which helps carry the reader on. There is also some reported speech which, if it can be trusted, is revealing; for instance, Sir Richard Whithill's account of an

interview with Henry VIII, when he told the King that Lisle had disregarded a royal nomination to a post at Calais:

His Grace said a' was sure, once, twice, or thrice, it was not so. I shewed his Grace it was of truth. His Grace asked me who? I shewed his Grace, one Leonard Snowden, your servant. Then his Grace answered, incontinent, What? so soon? so soon?

Immediacy, on the one hand, on the other the opportunity for an exploration of attitudes, in depth and in context, is what the Lisle Letters offer. Miss Byrne has shown extraordinary patience and perseverance. But she has in a sense been lucky in her timing. When the work was started, social history was largely the provision of picturesque "background". The invigoration of the subject in the 1950s and 1960s concentrated on generalizations: in the absence of meaningful statistics, historians paraded examples and counter-examples plucked from a variety of sources, with little regard to context or close reading. But they rescued the subject from dilettantism, and provided a frame of reference which gave meaning to the specific. Miss Byrne has laboured, I suspect, with little attention to academic fashion. She has brought to life, rather in the way of Ladurie on Montilaou or Alain Macfarlane on Ralph Josselin, a significant segment of the past, and shown the harvest which can be won by intensive cultivation.

## Forging the machine

By Piers Mackesy

J. A. HOULING:  
The Training of the British Army  
1715-1795

459pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press, £25  
0 19 82647 0

"Our military education is by far the worst in Europe, and all our concerns are treated with contempt, or totally neglected." Wolfe's scathing words were written just four years before the spectacular triumphs of British infantry at Minden and Quebec. It is easier to assess the British army by quoting famous generals - Wolfe, Moore and Wellington, impatient men with high standards - than by laborious research in the files of the Horse Guards. A consensus account of the army between the end of Queen Anne's wars and the battle of Waterloo would depict "vagabonds that stroll about in dirty red clothes from one gin-shop to another" (Wolfe's words again), officered by lazy, ignorant absentees. There would be stupid valour at Fontenoy, a flash of

glory in the Seven Years War, then dismal failure in America and Flanders to be redeemed only by the genius of Wellington.

Then why the glory? At Quebec the usual answer is simply "Wolfe". But at Minden? Surely not Sackville. In the American War it is now generally accepted that the army's performance was usually alert, enterprising and professional; and in the Peninsula Wellington was making brilliant use of a machine already forged. To explain the mystery of the often fine performance of an institution so dismally portrayed, J. A. Houlding has produced through some of the dustiest files in the War Office archives to produce an exciting book. As a Canadian he follows in the footsteps of several compatriots who have been able to accept the old British army on its own terms and to shed light where there had been darkness. His lucid style and mastery of detail have enabled him to write the most important work on the subject for a generation.

Dr Houlding argues that the regiments were trained and led "by an officer corps which was careerist, long-serving, notably experienced, and capable". That does not seem to have been

the general impression among their European allies, and perhaps the author exaggerates; but he produces weighty evidence of widespread study and professional reading, thorough inspection of the regiments in peacetime, and commanding officers who put all their energy and experience into making their units efficient. There were other reasons for the unfitness of many regiments when war broke out; reasons imposed by British society and political institutions.

There was, first, the combination of low establishments with rapid turnover of men. In peacetime the average strength of the regiments of foot was only ninety per cent of the authorized establishment, and sixteen per cent of the soldiers were recruits. This meant that only continual training could maintain an efficient instrument for war. But the peacetime routine made this impossible. The regiments were constantly on the move, marching about the country strung out in small packets. When they were stationary, their quarters were dispersed over a wide area in public houses. If they were quartered in a town, they could be removed and scattered to the surrounding villages to make way for a militia muster, a race-meeting or the assizes. Since there was no police force they were the only body capable of coping with the endemic rioting; and units were moved about, a company here, a troop there, to keep public order. Anti-smuggling patrols in aid of the revenue service dispersed them still more widely. A corporal and a couple of troopers could be out with a riding officer of the revenue service trying to stop the huge armed gangs which escorted the contraband convoys through the southern and eastern counties. In 1766-67 the Scots Greys were scattered in nineteen packets across eighty miles between Havant and Rye, the smallest groups consisting of two troopers. Few regiments of foot spent as much as a third of their time together, one-seventh being more typical. Few regiments of cavalry were concentrated for as much as a tenth of the year, and their horses were away at grass for four or five months of the summer to save money.

In these conditions tactical training and even battalion drill were impossible. For most of the time, training consisted of individual instruction of recruits and endless repetition of mechanical basic training; especially the manual firelock exercise, contemptuously referred to as "one-two". What saved the army were the annual inspections. Every year for two or three weeks the regiment was concentrated to prepare for inspection by a general officer who had been appointed for the season by the Horse

Guards. His report was detailed and if necessary critical. In one regiment "the men are slouching and ill set up; they are not steady and do not know how to handle their arms". A better regiment "would be fit for service, if the officers took as much pains as the men". The Hanoverian kings also took a personal interest. They read the inspection returns, and often rode out from London to conduct a surprise inspection. Only in the period before the annual inspection could a battalion count on its ten companies drilling together, to equalize their marching pace, practice the battalion firing system, and try out some of the numerous tactical evolutions laid down in regulations.

Still, however, there was little provision for training of higher formations and senior commanders. In London the foot guards were permanently together, and held annual camps in Hyde Park where brigade evolutions were performed. In Ireland the regiments of the Dublin garrison were rotated annually, so that each in turn could take part in brigade exercises in Phoenix Park, where the latest regulations could be tested. But in England in peacetime few regiments or generals had a chance of brigade training. For the sake of economy and for lack of suitable camps and training areas, there were no regular peacetime camps such as the Continental armies held.

This meant that when war broke out most of the army was not, in the phrase of the inspection reports, "fit for service". If thrown into field operations at an early stage they would perform shakily, as they did at Dettingen, the Monongahela and in the Flanders campaigns of the 1790s. "The fire of our Foot was infamous, Puff, Puff", reported an officer who saw the untrained regiments break at Prestonpans. But it was only in war that training for war could begin. At home there were regular summer camps to meet invasion; and here at least combined training began. Manoeuvres replaced the monotonous manual exercise - "the feet and not the arms will be exercised" - and Houlding reveals a surprising and imaginative variety of exercises and mock battles: advance to contact, attack and defence of woods, fortified houses and entrenchments; flanking movements, street fighting, river crossings, night marches and ambushes.

It was still a minority of regiments that had camp experience. The majority went to war without it, and completed their training in the field. "One-two" was dropped, and the complexity of the drill books was ironed out to what could be practised on the battlefield. In the Seven Years War, for example, the immensely elaborate checker system

of platoon fire was replaced unofficially by the rolling alternate fire, the companies volleying in turn inwards from the battalion's flanks.

Three years of wartime training explain the successes of the *armus mirabilis*, 1759. The six battalions which shattered the French cavalry at Minden had had camp training before they embarked for Germany; and on arriving in the theatre they were kept out of action for a year while they trained intensively under the unduly maligned Lord George Sackville. Firing with ball, practising the alternate firing, field-days, were the secrets of the Minden victory, as they were of Wolfe's crushing volley on the Heights of Abraham.

Houlding analyses the succession of official *Regulations* which, from the middle of the century, pushed the army's tactics into greater flexibility and kept them in line with Continental developments. He sees the 1760s and 70s as the turning-point towards increasing sophistication of manoeuvre. These official publications were backed by numerous private publications which sold well and were widely studied. It was in the 1790s that the foundations of the Peninsular army were laid, when Colonel David Dundas's *Principles of Military Movements* (1788) were adopted in the 1792 *Regulations*. This was not done without extensive testing in the Dublin garrison, where Dundas was the Irish staff. From Ireland trained regiments disseminated the new drill in overseas garrisons, while in England a special camp on Bagshot Heath displayed the new manoeuvres to George III. The appointment of the Duke of York as Commander-in-Chief in 1795, with Dundas as his Adjutant-General, ensured that the uniform training of the army was maintained. It had all been more systematic than is commonly supposed.

The Duke of York's role in preparing the army for its peninsular victories has been pointed out by other historians, notably Richard Glover, a fellow Canadian, in his book *Peninsular Preparation*. But Houlding suggests that in making his point Professor Glover exaggerated the defects of the old army. In doing so he followed a long tradition. Politicians and generals who served through the Napoleonic War acquired a vested interest in overpainting the faults their generation had corrected. Castlereagh is often quoted: "A British Army . . . had no more uniformity of movements or discipline and appearance in its various regiments than one composed of the troops of different sovereign states." Dr Houlding offers us a different picture of the eighteenth-century army.

## On the Parnassian slopes

By Roderick Beaton

### ODYSSEUS ELYTIS:

*The Axion Esti*  
Translated and annotated by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis  
103pp. Anvil Press. £5.95.  
0 85646 065 6

### TAKIS SINPOULOS:

*Selected Poems*  
Translated by John Stathatos  
94pp. Oxus Press, 16 Haslemere Road, London, N8. £3.50.  
0 905501 11 X

### GERARD CASEY:

*Between the Symplegades*  
Re-Visions from "A Mythical Story" by George Seferis  
37pp. Enitharmon Press. £3.75.  
(paperback, £2.40).  
0 905289 86 2

A consequence of Greece's recent accession to the EEC predicted in a light-hearted mood by an academic colleague was the likely establishment of a Greek "poetry mountain". With a population of less than a fifth of that of Great Britain, Greece nonetheless produces annually a greater volume of published poetry. Who reads it all is another matter; but it is not only in quantity of published work that Greek poets excel. Since the time of Constantine Cavafy in the early part of this century, several of them have established international reputations, while others have produced work of exceptional quality which remains little known abroad.

Odysseus Elytis was surprisingly little read in this country until the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979 brought him into the international limelight. This is not wholly the fault of translators - he is well represented in the early translations of Greek poetry by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, translations of his poetry have been appearing in magazines such as *Agenda* for many years, and Kimon Friar's book-length selection, *The Sovereign Sun*, was published in America in 1974. The truth seems to be that poetry which is lyrical, optimistic and which exalts in the possibilities of language does not so easily find favour with British readers as it does say, in France, where Elytis is much better

known. Be that as it may, it is a sad reflection on British publishers and readers that the translation by Keeley and George Savidis of Elytis's greatest work, *The Axion Esti*, has only recently been brought out in this country, six years after it appeared in a limited edition in the United States.

Edmund Keeley is a veteran translator of Greek poetry, having collaborated with Philip Sherrard on the now classic *Collected Poems* of Seferis, and more recently on translations of Cavafy and Sikelianos, while Savidis is one of Greece's foremost editors and textual scholars. The result is a translation of a high degree of accuracy, with a useful explanatory preface and an excellent and wisely selective set of notes, many of them based on the poet's own unpublished commentary, and a valuable adjunct to the original Greek text, which is unannotated. The faithful translation aims above all to be of this point of view, and it is a pity publishers have not been able to retain the parallel-text format for which the translation was originally intended, and with reference is still made in the preface.

As the translators themselves concede in this preface, no English equivalent can do complete justice to the linguistic exuberance and allusiveness of Elytis's text, and it must be admitted that they have not always risen fully to this challenge. In particular the English translation in the preface, to avoid echoes of the King James Bible is arguably a mistaken one, in that the enrichment of the contemporary poetic language by judicious allusion to the language of earlier periods is one of the major achievements of the poem. The language of the translation is too consistently contemporary, and in the prose passages the introduction of modern slang to reproduce the "early nineteenth-century diction" of the original obscures the deliberate datedness of that idiom, and of Elytis's inspired exploitation of the general elements between the styles of General Makriyannis and of the Greek New Testament. Similarly, the inclusion of one each of the best known Anglo-Saxon four-letter words may have seemed to the translators obligatory for publication in America in the mid-1970s, but jars a little today. Elytis

is a poet who calls a great many things by their names without prurience, but without vulgarity either.

These are small criticisms, however, when set beside the very considerable achievement of the translators in giving us a fresh and always readable version of a poetic work of such magnitude and complexity.

No less to be welcomed is a new volume, translated by John Stathatos, of *Selected Poems* by Takis Sinopoulos, Sinopoulos, who died earlier this year at the age of sixty-four, until recently almost completely unknown in this country. Translations by Stathatos first appeared here in 1975, and with the small collection *Sinopoulos* has in a short space of time become one of the best represented Greek poets of his generation in English translation.

The world of Sinopoulos's poetry is a bleak one: it is rather as if Wilfred Owen had lived into his sixties and continued to write about the trenches. Scarred by his experiences during the Second World War and the ensuing civil war, Sinopoulos spent a lifetime trying to exorcise ghosts, and it is both a limitation of his poetry and a source of its obsessive strength that he failed to do so. Stathatos's translations are terse, urgent and vividly recreate a sense of nightmare, of alternate efforts to escape and to come to terms with the constant presence of violent death.

In his last poem, "The Grey Light", included here in full, Sinopoulos, according to the translator, "confirms that he is a poet not of death but of that true hope which can only be found at the end of a journey through the heart of darkness". That hope had flickered throughout Sinopoulos's poetic career - in the figure of Helen, in the surreal encounter with "Max", in the tortured relationship of the middle-aged couple Ioanna and Konstantinos, in the poem "which might lead that prison, all of eternity in one fell swoop" of *Sinopoulos*. But this last poem of Sinopoulos retains the ambiguity of earlier promises - the serenity which the poet finds may be closely linked

with awareness of his own approaching death:

Kimón kept saying in the previous dream there is much darkness in your mouth. Only in dreams, said Kimón, does the river's deathlight suddenly glimmer in this way.

There must be some doubt as to whether *Between the Symplegades* by Gerard Casey really belongs in a review of translations. The poems in this volume are reworkings - somewhat portentously subtitled "Re-Visions" - of poems by George Seferis, and the aim of the author/translator "has been to present a free interpretation of the poems as they struck one particular reader". It would clearly be unfair in these circumstances to complain of inaccuracies in translation, since the poems are not offered as translations; but their dependence on Seferis's originals is close enough to prevent them from being called original poems. As a result one is left rather uneasily comparing Seferis's poems with Casey's "Re-Visions" of them and wondering if even this is quite fair.

Certainly there is every sign of thoughtful engagement with Seferis's originals, and a carefully worked attempt to recreate his "visions" in a more streamlined, smoother style. Inevitably certain things are lost: Seferis was such a careful, conscious artist himself that any rearrangement involves a change in emphasis, if not of meaning; the loss of one ambiguity and quite often the creation of another. There are deliberate omissions in these reworkings, but more disturbing is the banality of some of the lines and ideas which Casey has added, such as the final line of a poem, "I throw this bottle into the sea", which seems a clumsy attempt to justify Seferis's subtitle, "Bottle in the Sea", and the addition, "It is expected of us/according to the rules" to Seferis's resounding "Will we be able to die properly?"

The general streamlining of Seferis's style does not after all make this dense and intentionally "difficult" poetry any easier to understand, although the absence of punctuation and a deceptively simple style make for a text which reads fluently and naturally. I can see no poetic or typographical justification, however, for neglect of the apostrophe.

## Speaking for the Ukraine

By Arnold McMillin

GEORGE S. N. LUCKYJ (Editor):  
*Shevchenko and the Critics 1861-1980*  
322pp. University of Toronto Press.  
\$30 (paperback, \$8.50).  
0 8020 2346 0

Even in the peculiar historical and political circumstances of Eastern Europe it is unusual for a writer to embody so fully the national spirit and aspirations of his people as Shevchenko has done for all Ukrainians since 1840, when his first volume of poetry, *Kobzar* (The Minstrel), was published. As Bohdan Rubchak suggests in his introduction to *Shevchenko and the Critics*, the metamorphoses in Shevchenko's image reflect the progress of modern Ukrainian consciousness itself, but, as with so many other aspects of Ukrainian culture, an element of fierce controversy is never far from the surface. Like several other non-Russian poets of the former Russian Empire (Byelorussia's Janka Kupala offers an obvious parallel), Shevchenko may be regarded either as a defender of the oppressed across national borders or else as a champion of Ukrainian interests regarded by young North American scholars made specifically for the volume.

Soviet and Western commentators have disputed with particular intensity since the 1930s, each side accusing the other of falsifying the poet's image.

But if the Soviet tendency to distort and simplify derived some of its momentum from Stalin's tyranny (many Russian poets, too, were repressed and bowdlerized at the time), the practice of publishing ostensibly complete editions of Shevchenko's work while omitting uncongenial anti-Russian poems continues to the present day, as indeed it does with Kupala and many other non-Russian poets. The Western response to such falsification has on occasion itself been over-politicized, but the challenge of restoring a more complete picture of Shevchenko has generally been met in a responsible and effective manner, by the publication of suppressed works and the dissemination of full bibliographical information, as well as by serious academic criticism and analysis. An important example of this latter was *Taras Shevchenko 1814-1861: a Symposium* (The Hague, 1962) from which a number of the pieces in the present anthology are drawn, and *Shevchenko and the Critics* performs a similarly valuable service by bringing together a wide selection of critical commentaries, ranging from the grave-sided oration of Panteleimon Kulish in 1861 to analytical articles by young North American scholars made specifically for the volume.

Thematically, this anthology is as

broad as its range of authors, covering Shevchenko's life and work from many angles. Bohdan Rubchak's excellent introduction analyses the poet's lasting significance, reviews (with admirably full bibliographical detail) the critical canon, and indicates some of the lacunae remaining to be filled. Thereafter the arrangement is chronological: Kulish, Mykhailo Drahomanov and Volodymyr Antonovych are followed by Ivan Franko, Ukraine's second greatest poet, whose foreword to Shevchenko's *Pererobka* (1898) is a classical piece of criticism. Also from the last decades of tsarism are Boris Hrinchenko on the poet's national ideals, Mykola Ievshan, and, particularly interesting, the Russian writer and scholar Korney Chukovsky on the poet's "abandonment" - it is a pity that space could not have been found for another very worthwhile Russian piece, Viktor Shklovsky's formalist analysis of Shevchenko's "Andrii Richytskyi on Shevchenko" ("muzhik" philosophy (1923). Pavlo Plytyvovich (1924) and Lisa Schneider (1978) on his romanticism, and Dmytro Chyhyzhevsky on his religion (1936) are amongst the most interesting treatments of general topics. Narrower, but also deserving of separate mention, are George Luckyj's study of the archetype of the bard in Shevchenko's poetry, Bohdan Rubchak's analysis of the ironic roles of the self in *Kobzar*, George Shevchenko's brilliant review of the year 1860 in Shevchenko's work, and the exiled mathematician Leonid

Plushch's illuminating philosophical discussion of *Prachynna* (The Bewitched Woman). The collection ends with a thought-provoking consideration of the deep structures in Shevchenko's works by George Grabowicz, an encouraging example of contemporary academic Shevchenko scholarship, avoiding set positions and automatic acceptance of Western received wisdom.

The "struggle for Shevchenko" (the title of an early Soviet book) is, however, an active one, and worth pursuing by scholarly means, since many artificially created myths are still maintained in present-day Ukraine; a good example is that of the Russian critic Belinsky's supposedly positive attitude towards the Ukrainian, successfully exploded by Victor Swoboda in the present volume.

The selection of the twenty-seven articles is admirable, and none of the contributions superfluous. The temptation, provoked by all anthologies, to suggest additional items is only strong in the case of Oleksander Biletsky, whose 1939 article on Shevchenko and world literature would have added an important new thematic dimension to the volume. Well edited, and with a glossary of historical terms and index, mainly of names and titles, *Shevchenko and the Critics* is a valuable reference work which should greatly further knowledge and understanding of one of the most powerful as well as most ill-used poets of the Slav world.

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# In a world gone wrong

By Philip Payne

DAVID S. LUTF:  
Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture 1880-1942  
323pp. University of California Press, £14.  
0 520 03652 5

Alice and Nietzsche, brought together in Robert Musil's imagination, became "Clarisse", one of the main characters in *The Man without Qualities*. Musil watched Alice Donath, the wife of a close friend, over many months as she slipped into insanity; as a young man Musil had felt Nietzsche's ideas pull strongly at his own mind and emotions. These two powerful experiences came together in the work on which his reputation as the leading Austrian novelist, and one of the most important figures in German literature of this century, is founded. Much of Musil's creative work rested on intellectual and emotional experiences which he could vouch for as authentic; he had lived through them himself, or had observed them closely in his wife or his friends, or had taken their measure in an intense imaginative reconstruction of the inner world of contemporaries who caught his attention. He worked in this way in order to create an image of his times which was unclouded by invention as possible. He disliked authors who paid less heed than he did to the matching of facts to words, and of both to the internal logic of a narrative. (He compared Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* to a shark's stomach in which the reader found the intellectual concerns of the day lying quite unassimilated inside the fiction.) Given the interrelations between Musil's life and his creative work it is surprising that David Lutf's *Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture, 1880-1942*, the first biography of Musil to appear since Wilfried Bergahn's much shorter monograph published by Rowohlt in 1963.

Lutf explores Musil's origins in the Austro-Hungarian "bourgeoisie", who had compromised their ideals of liberalism, Enlightenment rationalism and German classical humanism — they had allied themselves with the backward-looking aristocratic establishment of a declining empire in an attempt to restrain the mass movements of Christian Socialism and Social Democracy. Musil felt the unease of a society on the verge of destruction, recognized that the social crisis was part of a deeper crisis and, like many others of his generation, wanted to play his part in the revival of culture itself. The problem was to decide how best to contribute. He tried various careers: soldier, engineer, academic philosopher or psychologist, librarian and, just before the outbreak of World War I, editor of Samuel Fischer's journal, *Die Neue Rundschau*. He achieved success in each field — he was even offered a post under the

distinguished philosopher Alexius Meinong, after completing his doctorate on Ernst Mach under the psychologist Carl Stumpf in Berlin — but he felt constantly frustrated by the sense that each career failed to satisfy his central concern. Only creative writing offered the freedom to devote himself to what he called "die geistige Bewältigung der Welt" ("mastering the world by intellectual means").

Central to this programme was, as Lutf shows quite brilliantly, a review of sexuality. Musil's exploration of this field was more immediate than that of his compatriot, Freud. After an initiation in sexual perversion at the military academy he attended as a boy, which he recorded in his first novel, *Young Törless* — Musil made only minor changes in the names of those involved — he contracted, and was cured of, syphilis while still a student of engineering at Brünn; it was only later that he broke free of the grip of his headstrong, hysterical mother, who was horrified when he took as mistress Herma Dietz, a Czech working-girl. Herma's death in Berlin was later narrated, partly verbatim from Musil's diary, in the short story, "Tonka". Musil's Berlin landlady, shocked by a literary sketch she happened to come across, decided Musil was a sex maniac, a more discriminating modern reader might have recognized in it evidence of Musil's scrutiny of his subconscious, glimpsed in half-remembered dreams, on which he was to base Christian Moosbrugger, the man who murders prostitutes in *The Man without Qualities*. For this character, exceptionally, there seems to have been no living counterpart; Musil drew on his own emotions and his reading of psychiatric texts. The richest experience came, again in Berlin, some years after Herma's death. Musil met Martha Marcovall, a painter who had been married twice and was several years older than he. Their relationship was marked by a complete frankness. Martha's confession that she had been unfaithful to Musil with a former lover provided the material for "The Temptation of Silent Veronika". In this story Musil developed a language of analogies to evoke transitory states of mind; this helped him to convey his perception of the way in which each individual establishes a network of ideas and feelings about himself or herself which, looking into a specific "Gestalt", becomes the guiding life principle. The act of infidelity, worked into the "Gestalt", became part of the bond between Musil and Martha. Their experiences provided the basis for the relationship of Ulrich and his sister, Agathe, in *The Man without Qualities*.

Lutf traces Musil's progression from passion to love and from love to mystical experience. After three years of marriage, war separated Musil from Martha. Their suffering merged into the suffering of their generation. But when the war was over most people forgot the feelings that had earlier overwhelmed them. This was one aspect of a general

flight from the metaphysical; because the old theories were discredited most men drew the false conclusion that all metaphysics was humbug. Musil wrote: "We have seen much and understood nothing [because] we did not have the concepts with which to take in what we experienced." Musil himself tried to hold on to the experience: first in the story "The Lady from Portugal" where Martha and he took on semi-mythical medieval roles against the background of the North Italian countryside where he had spent much of the war, and later in his major work, where he analysed the causes of Europe's descent into war and tried to isolate elements of an awareness from which European culture might be reborn.

Musil's masks of irony and intellectual non-involvement do not deceive Lutf; he sees through them to the message: the conflicts of contemporary ideologies all take place within the orbit of a world gone wrong; human awareness must be jolted out of its cultural rut before significant change can take place; to progress, men must turn away from their obsession with objectivity, close the gap between thinking and feeling, and rediscover the (Musil) "fire of

## Crumbling worlds

By Stuart Parkes

URS JAEGLI:

Grundriss  
275pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.  
3 472 86532 6

KARL OTTO MÜHL:  
Trumpener Irrtum  
202pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.  
3 472 86528 8

ALMA JOHANNA KOENIG:  
Der jugendliche Gott  
299pp. Hamburg: Styria.  
3 222 11299 1

The first two of these novels both deal with a crisis in the life of an individual. Urs Jaegli is a professor of sociology at the Free University of Berlin, who has become as well known for his literary as for his academic writings. Like his creator, the narrator, Albert, is a Swiss living in West Berlin, albeit with the different profession of architect. The crisis he faces has three aspects: a professional one, one resulting from his relationship with his wife and another concerning his adolescent daughter. Professionally, he is dissatisfied with his work, which, despite his progressive aspirations, he sees as contributing to the destruction of the environment of the city. Because of this, he abandons his job, makes friends with Robert, a former alcoholic and refugee from the East, and plans with him an alternative theatre. Although the project comes to fruition, Robert, who has been diagnosed as having a brain tumour, commits suicide and Albert returns tentatively to his architectural work.

Albert's wife, Ursula, is a lawyer who defends the underprivileged and, occasionally, suspected terrorists. She too, like her husband, has left-wing opinions. This does not prevent strains in the marriage, underlined by Albert's relationship with another woman and his decision to move into a flat in an inner-city area. His difficulties with his wife, however, seem slight when compared to those he has with his precocious thirteen-year-old daughter, Rutli, who regards teachers as the class enemy and school as an instrument of fascism. Although there is a bond of affection between the two, all his advice seems to fall on deaf ears.

It would be easy to indulge in wholesale condemnations of Jaegli's novel. Many will lack sympathy with a central character who seems to have brought most of his problems on himself. Equally, it can be pointed out that the work lacks plot and structure, consisting largely of a series of brief descriptions and inter-

goodness" within them which is no mere figment of the mystics' imagination. Unfortunately Lutf misses much of the detail in *The Man without Qualities* which is of interest to intellectual historians. The narrative is full of the evidence of Musil's wide reading and of his profound awareness of the workings of the contemporary world. An immense amount of information about this is found in the invaluable critical edition of Musil's diaries, published by Adolf Frisé in December 1976. Lutf's decision to ignore this work, perhaps because his own research was well advanced when Frisé's edition appeared, is regrettable. Lutf does not explain how Musil worked quotations from his contemporaries into his narrative nor how he often made a kind of "working model" of some famous person with his or her private and usually eccentric (Musil) system of equilibrium on display. (Musil noticed, for example, that Walther Rathenau often put an arm over the shoulder of the man he happened to be talking to. What psychic necessity, he wondered, prompted this habit? Musil had once felt the pressure of that arm himself and could still remember the hairs bristling on his neck in animal loathing. This close encounter of two

novel monologues. In the latter part of the novel, for instance, the theme of Albert's relationship with his wife is almost abandoned as his concern for his daughter comes to dominate the narrative.

Such a critical view would be one-sided: *Grundriss* has both interest and merit. It successfully evokes the atmosphere of West Berlin as a city beset with social problems and characterized by numerous alternative political groups. Jaegli is able to inspire sympathy for his characters, particularly in his presentation of the father-and-daughter relationship where the unstructured narrative form does make the characters' predicament appear authentic. Moreover, the final impression left by the novel is not one of despair. Even if at the end Albert's life is somewhat incredibly destroyed because of a mistake by demolition workers, he has gained from his experiences and seems, professionally at least, to be more likely to be able to achieve something positive.

Despite the similar theme, Mühl's *Trumpener Irrtum* is a very different kind of work. The author looks at his characters from a sovereign distance and unfolds their story with ordered precision. Trumpener works in data-processing. He is reasonably successful, self-assured and apparently humane. In the course of the novel, however, his world crumbles. When his firm is taken over it is decided that it no longer needs a separate data-processing unit and he is forced out of his job without actually being sacked. On the personal level, his wife leaves him because of his patronizing manner. Although he has two other relationships, these never develop satisfactorily because of his lack of emotional warmth.

The events of the novel immediately raise the question of the author's attitude to his characters. Is he, especially in the case of

## Frischschritt

SIEGFRIED UNSELD (Editor):  
Begegnungen  
Eine Festschrift für Max Frisch  
226pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM32.  
3 518 02842 1

The latest example of that most successful of German exports, the Festschrift, celebrates the seventieth birthday of the Swiss writer Max Frisch with brief tributes from most of the stars of the German literary firmament: writers such as Siegfried Lenz, Martin Walser and Christa

sensitive psychic "systems" can be seen in the novel when Dr Arnheim — a virtually undisguised Rathenau — tries to patronize Ulrich, Musil's "persona".) Lutf even fails to identify some of these "models". "Graf Leinsdorf" who stands for the politician Prince Alois Liechtenstein; "Lindner" and "Hagauer" who represent the educationalists Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster and George Kerschensteiner; and "Feuermaul", a study of Franz Werfel. Some of Lutf's translations are unsatisfactory ("half-assed" and "shit" are not words that the fastidious Musil would have used if he had written in English; among the mistakes are: "to win" as a translation for "gewinnen" which in the context means "to earn" (p. 155); "reflective" instead of "superior" as a translation of the adjective "überlegen" (p. 155); "to hold at" for "halten für" instead of "to consider" (p. 217)). It is a measure of Robert Musil's own achievement that Lutf, despite his knowledge of the historical period, his understanding of Musil and his many years of work on this project, has not written the definitive critical biography; but Lutf's study, above all for its account of Musil's earlier development, will serve until that appears.

Trumpener, simply taking a delight in showing the humiliation of an unpleasant person? In fact, he does show that some of his protagonist's problems are the result of a deep-rooted anxiety caused by social pressures. At the end of the novel, too, something has changed. When he hears that his wife has to go to hospital, Trumpener wishes to be with her, not to indulge his feelings of humanity but because he realizes his own weakness and vulnerability.

Mühl's writing is generally skilful and readable, despite some flaws. He repeatedly states, for instance, that his characters will think of some incident differently in the future, whilst the presentation of the female characters remains largely superficial.

Alma Johanna Koenig was a Jewish writer, who completed her novel, *Der jugendliche Gott*, about the childhood and early reign of the Emperor Nero, only shortly before her deportation and murder by the Nazis. The Verlag Styria is to be congratulated on republishing the work. It tells in a dramatic way how Nero becomes gradually debauched until he orders the murder of his mother. His development is seen primarily as the result of a childhood in which he was starved of love. He is also manipulated into the position of Emperor while he dreams of being an actor and singer. Finally, the corruption and syphocancy of those around him cause him to explore the extremes of iniquity they will tolerate.

Koenig's main concerns are moral and psychological; she wishes to show how evil develops. It is tempting to make comparisons between Nero and Hitler (if contemporaries had had access to the book, they could hardly have avoided doing so) but the work itself does not draw any forced historical parallels. It is an example of a well-written historical novel that is neither artificially modern nor archaic.

## Schools within schools

Wolf, and critics like Hans Mayer and Adolf Muschg. There are few substantial offerings — a notable exception is Uwe Johnson's "Skizze eines Verunglückten" — but the collection usefully charts the extent and character of the influence Frisch has exerted upon his own and subsequent generations. His novels and especially his diaries seem to have mattered more than the plays — perhaps because the talents of this introspective, esoteric writer are not dramatic. Muschg exposes very well the persistent hostility of the Swiss establishment to Frisch, but how much worse, if it had embraced him!

## English Literature

MARILYN BUTLER:  
Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries  
English Literature and its Background 1760-1830  
213pp. Oxford University Press, £7.95.  
0 19 219144 6

In this short, densely-written book Marilyn Butler explores anew the phenomenon known as Romanticism. Her work is intended to give a new interpretation, one which stresses the heterogeneity of the literary forms and attitudes of the age by giving the "critic-historian" reply to the received view of Romanticism (most influentially promulgated by M. H. Abrams and René Wellek) as distinguishable from classicism by its exaltation of perception, imagination, organic form, and symbolism. She rightly insists that

"Romanticism" is inchoate because it is not a single intellectual movement but a complex of responses to certain conditions which Western society has experienced and continues to experience since the middle of the eighteenth century. There seems small chance of understanding how social pressures worked upon the artistic process except by making careful discriminations between the atmosphere of different cultures, notably England, France and Germany, and different times (England in 1789, for example, differentiated from England in 1798 or in 1817).

Like any critic of the period, she faces at the outset the problem of definition. Are the terms "Romantic", "classical", and "Enlightenment" useful or even usable? Need the critic cast glances at the culture of countries other than England, and if he does, what significance can be drawn from the similarities and contrasts he perceives? Is it helpful to draw on arts other than literature? To all these questions Marilyn Butler would answer emphatically, yes. It follows that her book is ambitious, difficult, and in places contentious. In tackling the problem of definition she resorts understandably to the visual arts, finding in recent art criticism a redefinition of Romanticism and of the need to change our perspective on what we too trustingly take to characterize the "Romantic" in literature.

A group of recent art critics, including Hugh Honour, Robert Rosenblum and Lorenz Bittner, have defined with a new clarity the artistic movement they call Neoclassicism, which began in the middle of the eighteenth century and thus preceded the American and French revolutions. Through this style went through modifications, its assumptions largely self-negating standards for both France and England, and two leading protagonists in the French revolutionary wars, until the struggle finally ended in 1815. If the interpreters of this movement are correct, it is Neoclassicism that initiates the rejection of previous values, the intellectual and artistic aggression, that for one and a half centuries has been attributed to Romanticism. Either, indeed, describes the eighteenth century as a period of "sharp action and innovation", the first half of the nineteenth century merely as one of "response and reflection".

The attraction of this alternative proposition, which permits a redefined Neoclassicism to go on co-existing with Romanticism, is that it allows for a dialogue within the arts, for conflict and even contradiction. Almost every attempt to represent our artistic new wave, one Romanticism, is hopelessly subverted by the richness of art in the period.

No one would argue with this sensible statement, yet some distortions inevitably occur when Marilyn Butler adopts the term "new classicists" for the younger generation of English Romantics, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Hazlitt and Peacock, since the characteristics usually defined as neoclassical

## Schools within schools

by Rosemary Ashton

by art historians — simplicity, universality, representativeness — cannot comfortably be transferred to apply to these writers. No doubt there are arguments enough among experts about the application of such definition to painting; how many more must there be among students of an art less predominantly formal, like literature? This is not to deny that comparisons between art and literature can be valuable for the appreciation of both, but rather to suggest that any wholesale transference of definitions is doomed to failure.

In practice, in fact, Marilyn Butler is too discriminating to attempt such a transference. When writing later in the book about the works of the younger Romantics, she perceives their "neoclassicism" not in the terms just suggested, but rather as a matter of religious freethinking and political radicalism in opposition to the Christian and conservative stance of the older Romantics, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. Thus the terminology is established by reference to a standard which is subsequently dropped, yet the term "neoclassical" (and the here related but undefined term "Enlightenment") persists throughout the book, as though it were a constant and reliable point of reference.

Marilyn Butler again impresses and provokes when she takes account of other literatures. It is understandable that in the early chapters, in which she is seeking to define her terms and sketch the boundaries of her study, she should turn primarily to the German Romantics. They, after all, were the most self-conscious and theoretical of European Romantic authors. Friedrich Schlegel actually used the term Romantic, as opposed to classical, to define his own and some of his contemporaries' literary endeavours. But despite this seeming homogeneity of attitude and philosophy among the Germans, they can no more be treated conveniently as a school speaking with one voice than can the so-called "Lake School" in England. To specify only a few difficulties: what part of Schiller's or Goethe's work can be called "classical"? What does Kleist or Hölderlin have in common with Novalis? What do we make of the fact that Shakespeare was viewed by some German critics of the period as a classical and by others as a Romantic author? or that, according to Schlegel, the novel is the Romantic form *par excellence* (a proposition hardly helpful for English literature of the time)? or that the German Romantics differed radically in their response to Kant, as well as in their political and religious persuasions?

There is, of course, some truth in Marilyn Butler's statements that "for the first two decades of the nineteenth century, German Romanticism remained Catholic and counter-revolutionary", and that Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* "commends the German example, which is religious", but such generalizations do not bear close scrutiny. After all, Coleridge can be seen in *Biographia Literaria* retreating from what he saw as the negative consequences for religion of the philosophies of Kant and Schelling, which he found intellectually so stimulating. It is surely taking an odd perspective on Coleridge's activities to say "Coleridge took up Madame de Staël's role as a mediator for contemporary German ideas", when Madame de Staël was (as Henry Crabb Robinson pointed out at the time) ignorant of German philosophy. Moreover, his intention in writing about Germany was propagandist and popularizing, which scarcely describes Coleridge's relations with German thought. Finally, it is simply not true that in the 1820s "German studies and German mysticism were fashionable". The figure of "German Romanticism" flits through the book like a ghost in a Gothic novel, changing its shape for convenience, and never appearing in more than a vague outline.

Marilyn Butler is at her best in this book, as in her excellent previous studies of Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Peacock, when she concentrates on an individual author whose work she admires and perceives

in its historical context. Thus she offers suggestive insights into Blake's relations with radical dissent and his later retreat into pietism and mysticism; she brings out well the circumstances under which "an apparently unpolitical poet like Keats" was reviewed politically in the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*; and Shelley's and Peacock's enthusiasm for Greek poetry and philosophy around 1817 is persuasively linked to an earlier interest in Greek mythology and mores, such as that manifested in Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*. One welcomes, too, her reminder that the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* has been read one-sidedly in the past:

If ever a phrase has been taken to define Romanticism in our popular notion of it, it is that part of the Preface that declares poetry to be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". But in its context that very sentence has Wordsworth, like a true son of the Enlightenment, putting a rational thought, moral intention and social utility above the subjective emotional side of the mind, and above the claims of self-expression.

Yet Butler does less than justice to Wordsworth's complex achievement as poet and critic. In part this is because no critic could tackle fully the implications (and contradictions) of Wordsworth's statements on poetic diction, the proper subject matter for poetry, metre and rhyme, the poet's function, and the language of poetry, in the few pages here devoted to Wordsworth. But the failure to do justice to Wordsworth derives in part, too, from her strong sense of the pattern of Romanticism, which leads her to overstate Wordsworth's exaltation of the solitary and the solipsistic, against which she sees the younger Romantics reacting. And to underestimate Wordsworth's concern with the social role of the poet. Towards the end of the book, she admits that the younger generation "magnified their disagreement with the older literary generation, and in particular exaggerated the extent to which the Lakists actually stood for the way of the hermit". But in fact it fits her own thesis earlier on to endorse, even to exaggerate, this antagonism. For example, she gives less than due attention to the ambivalence of Keats's attitude to Wordsworth (or Mary Shelley's, for that matter), whose "egotistical" mode he did, after all, dignify with the substantive "sublime".

In her chapter on Coleridge, Dr Butler defines acutely Coleridge's dilemma in the 1790s when she says he "found his own intellectual position horribly compromised by the schism within the radical movement between Christians and Deists, which meant that though he still notionally abhorred 'aristocracy', his profoundest disagreements were with his fellow-liberals". However, when she stands back to view the overall pattern, her perspective on Coleridge becomes peculiar, and surely distorting, as in her sweeping review of the *raison d'être* of *Biographia Literaria*:

The humble, modest, quietist tone of the counter-revolution functions as an appropriate answer to the self-assertion of Neoclassicism. Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* needs a text to preach against, and picks the *Lyrical Ballads* of his own friend Wordsworth in unregenerate days.

The reader of this book is constantly stimulated, provoked into considering complex cultural conditions both in close detail and from the larger historical viewpoint. One passage, taken from the chapter on the younger Romantics, may serve to illustrate how this ambitious approach earns our admiration; yet at the same time arouses some disagreement with its brief, bold statements:

Viewed in the light of their revived and conscious classicism, the so-called "younger Romantics" — Byron, Shelley and Keats — make, together with their friends Peacock, Hunt and Hazlitt, a clearly defined literary group. Nevertheless their movement defines itself by what it is

not. It is not the literature of the North-German Romanticism, in Madame de Staël's account of it, which is introspective and Christian. It is not like Wordsworth's *Excursion*, reflective, autobiographical, exalting privacy and withdrawal from society. Nor is it like the ideal of art which Coleridge sketches in the *Lay Sermons* and especially in the *Biographia Literaria* — religious, medievalist and professionally exclusive. The English literary writers of the post-war period are extrovert not introvert, and pagan not Christian. They prefer objective forms, such as narrative and drama, to the confessional forms like autobiography. In keeping with their formal sense and their inclination to objectivity, they use traditional genres — elegy, ode, drama, verse epistle — more consistently and consciously than their elders. Moreover their poems are deliberately structured, often along dialectical lines that suggest the rational play of mind.

The points of reference here are surely often unstable: a movement (of younger English Romantics) which is not a movement and is to be defined in terms of a different movement — German Romanticism — but that only, as Marilyn Butler cautiously and correctly qualifies it, "in Madame de Staël's account of it" (an imperfect one). Coleridge's ideal of art as "medievalist", the spare opposition of pagan to Christian, extrovert to introvert; the implicit devaluing of the importance of the lyric form in the works of Shelley and Keats in the interests of seeing the younger Romantics seeking "objective forms, such as narrative and drama". Did not Wordsworth, Coleridge, and most of the German Romantic poets write in these forms too?

The most exciting judgments in the book are those on Scott. Here Marilyn Butler's obvious enthusiasm for an individual writer is successfully linked to her larger aim to reread the history of Romanticism. She points out that notions of Scott as Tory and medievalizing are unsubtle; that Scott's subject in his novels is more genuinely revolution than Scotland, and that his attitude towards revolution is by no means entirely negative. "Nothing," she writes, "is more significant in Scott than his sense of the interdependence of the classes. The old aristocracy are pitiful and even a little ridiculous when they start asserting their traditional claims as chieftains." And she gives a convincing reason for Scott's having served, rather than Jane Austen, as a model for the great Victorian novelists, as well as for European writers of the nineteenth century:

Scott is a great writer, subtle, sane, very original in the fable he devises for his time. His novels are formally much more original than Jane Austen's, and for a number of reasons the mode he developed proved more useful to his successors. He devised a vehicle that could convey a portrait of contemporary society, and at the same time represent as central the plight of individuals whose lives were caught up in an impersonal mechanism.

If discriminatingly read, this book is full of information and insights for the reader. It is both too brief and too dense and allusive to serve as a new introduction to Romantic literature. As a comprehensive panorama of the culture of the age it is impressive and provocative, but suffers, perhaps inevitably, from a problem analogous to Hume's self-confessed philosophical dilemma. Marilyn Butler, like Hume, starts from a perception of a large, complex phenomenon, breaking it down into its constituent parts; the problem arises when she attempts to fit the often brilliantly identified individual elements back into the whole without distortion. She is an acute and discriminating critic, formidable when dealing with individual authors who interest (rather than irritate) her, but *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*, with all its fine insights, attempts the larger view with only a moderate degree of success.

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it was clear that consciousness had come back to me — I no longer wished to put the blame on the investigators, so as not to worsen my own position. However, I was still very weak, psychologically unstable, and found every breath I took difficult and painful, and these circumstances postponed my discharge for a few days.

On my return to the prison I was expecting to be taken to interrogation again, and made myself ready for anything so long as I did not incriminate either myself or others. I was not, however, taken to interrogation; instead I was thrown into one of the large common cells filled to bursting with prisoners. It was a big room intended for twelve to fifteen men, with a mesh door giving on to the prison corridor. There were seventy to eighty people in it, sometimes rising to a hundred. Clouds of steam and the special prison stench reached me in the corridor, and I remember being astonished by it. They could hardly shut the door after me, and I found myself in a crowd of people wedged tight against each other or sitting in disorderly heaps all over the room. Learning that the newcomer was a writer, my neighbours informed me that the cell contained other writers too, and soon they brought along P.N. Medvedev and D.I. Vygodsky, who had been arrested before me. Seeing the sad state I was in, my comrades fixed me up a place in some corner. Thus began my prison life in the proper sense.

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There are certain common characteristics signs that distinguish the majority of free people from the unfree. The former are sufficiently self-confident, have more or less a sense of their own worth, and react to external irritations calmly and sensibly. In the years of my imprisonment the average person, deprived of his liberty without due cause, humiliated, isolated, frightened and knocked out of his senses by the fantastic environment into which he had suddenly come, more often than not would lose the individuality that in freedom was his. Like a hare in a trap he would rush around helplessly, pushing at open doors, pleading his innocence, trembling with fear before worthless degenerates, losing his human qualities; he would be suspicious of everybody, would lose faith in those nearest him and would himself reveal his own lowest qualities, previously hidden from outsiders. After a few days of prison treatment the features of a slave would be clearly apparent on his countenance, and the lie foisted upon him would begin to put down roots in his confused and trembling soul.

In the Remand Prison, where people were held only during the period of investigation, this process of spiritual decay was only just beginning in people. Here one could observe all aspects of despair and all the manifestations of numbed hopelessness, of convulsive hysterical joy and of cynical indifference to everything in the world, including one's own life. It was strange to see these grown men now groaning, now fainting, now shaking with fear, persecuted and pitiable. I was told that the writer Adrian Pistrovsky, who had been in the cell not long before me, lost any human appearance in his grief, flung himself about the cell, scoured his chest with some sort of nail and at night got up to shamble things for all the cell to see. But in this respect the record was apparently held by Valentin Stenich, who was in the adjoining cell. An aesthete, snob and gourmand in ordinary life, by the accounts of the prisoners he quickly found a common language with the investigators, and for a packet of cigarettes would sign any sort of testimony. In fairness one must say that alongside such people there were others who maintained their human dignity at the expense of the greatest efforts. Often these decent people had until their arrest been humble cogs in our society, while the great of the world were frequently changed in prison into the pitiful semblance of men. Prison purified people, but not in the sense that Zakovsky (3) and his fellow bosses wanted.

This process of human disintegration went on before the eyes of the whole cell. A man could not be

alone here for a single moment, and he even had to attend to his needs at an open lavatory in the same place. He who wanted to weep wept in public, and the sense of natural shame made his pain ten times worse. He who wanted to commit suicide was obliged to grit his teeth and at night, under his blanket, attempt to open his veins with a splinter of glass — but somebody's sleepless eye used quickly to discover the would-be suicide, and his comrades would disarm him. This life in public was an additional torment, but at the same time it assisted many to live through their intolerable sufferings.

The cell in which I found myself was like a huge, perpetually buzzing cauldron where all day long people trampled about in close proximity, breathed in each other's exhalations; they had to step over prostrate bodies as they walked, quarrelled and made peace, wept and laughed. Ordinary criminals were mixed in with the political; but in 1937-38 the political were ten times more numerous, and thus the criminals behaved timidly and unselfconfidently in the prison. In the camps they were our overlords, but in prison they were scarcely noticeable. In charge of our cell there was an elected leader by the name of Gekman. On him depended the ordering of our lives. He allocated places — where one was to sleep and sit — according to one's length of imprisonment, apportioned rations and supervised good order. Full agreement and discipline were needed to arrange everyone for the night. Space was such that people could lie down only on their side, jammed tight against each other, and even then not all at once but in two shifts. Night arrangements were carried out at the leader's command, and it was an astonishing performance of regulated, precisely calculated movements and transpositions worked out by many "generations" of prisoners who had had to live in a tight-packed throng and who gradually passed on their acquired skills to newcomers.

By day the cell lived a sluggish and tedious life. Every trivial hum-drum action — sewing on a button, mending torn clothes, going to the lavatory — grew into a major problem. Thus to go to the lavatory one had to wait in a queue for not less than half an hour. Interest was brought into the daily routine only by breakfast, lunch and supper. In the Remand Prison the food was tolerable, and the prisoners did not go hungry. Searches were another form of entertainment. They took place regularly and were of a humiliating nature. They only partially

fulfilled their purpose, since every prisoner knew dozens of ways to hide his needle, his pencil or (greatest treasure of all) his pen-knife or razor-blade. Prisoners were scarcely ever summoned to interrogation during the day.

Interrogations used to begin at night, when the whole multi-storey facade on Liteyny Prospekt was flooded with hundreds of lights, and hundreds of sergeants, lieutenants and captains of the State Security together with their assistants got down to their routine tasks. The vast stone courtyard of the building, overlooked by the open windows of the offices, was filled with the groans and soul-rending screams of men being beaten up. The whole cell shuddered as if an electric current had suddenly passed through it, and dumb terror would again appear in the eyes of the prisoners. So as to drown these screams they often stationed heavy lorries in the courtyard with their engines running. But beyond the roar of the engines our imaginations pictured something already totally indescribable and our nervous agitation reached an extreme pitch.

From time to time one of the prisoners would be fetched out for interrogation. He would be summoned in the following way:

"Ivanov!" the warder would yell, coming up to the mesh door.

"Vasily Petrovich!" the prisoner would have to answer, giving his first two names.

"To the investigator!"

The prisoner would be taken out of the cell, searched and led along corridors to the NKVD building. In all the corridors there had been set up tightly-sealed wooden cabins, rather like cupboards or telephone-booths. To avoid meeting other detainees who might appear at the end of the corridor the prisoner would normally be pushed into one such cabin, where he would have to wait till the other man had been led past.

From time to time those who had already been interrogated returned to the cell; sometimes they were pushed inside in complete prostration, while others almost had to be carried in, and subsequently we would spend a long time caring for these unfortunates, giving them cold compresses and water to drink. Moreover it often happened that a warder would come merely to collect a prisoner's belongings, while the prisoner called to interrogation did not return to the cell.

Mockery and blows were the lot of those who at that time conducted themselves otherwise than the way

the interrogator wanted: ie, those who simply did not wish to denounce others.

D. I. Vygodsky, a most honourable man, a talented writer and already old, was dragged by the beard and spat upon in the face by an investigator. A sixty-year-old professor of mathematics, my neighbour in the cell, with a disease of the liver, was made to get down on hands and knees by a sadistic investigator and kept in this position for hours on end, so as to exacerbate his illness and cause intolerable sufferings. Once on the way to interrogation I was accidentally pushed into the wrong office and saw a beautiful young woman in a black dress hitting an investigator in the face; he seized her by the hair, threw her to the floor and started to kick her with his boots. I was at once hauled out of the room, and behind my back I heard her terrifying screams.

How did the prisoners try to explain these perversions of the legal process, these inhuman tortures and torments? Most of them were convinced that they had genuinely been mistaken for major criminals. There were tales of one unfortunate who at every beating-up frantically yelled, "Long live Stalin!" Two fellows would hit him with rubber truncheons wrapped in newspaper and he, writhing with pain, glorified Stalin, wishing that with due demonstration his orthodoxy. The shadow of a guess flickered through the minds of the most sensible, and others were evidently not far from a true understanding of the matter, but all such people, persecuted and terrorized, dared not share their thoughts with each other, since not without reason they assumed that spies and secret informers, willing and unwilling, were busy in the cell. In my own head there grew the curious conviction that we were in the hands of the fascists, who right under the noses of our authorities had managed to liquidate the Soviet citizens at the centre of the penal system. I confided this guess of mine to an old Party member who was sitting beside me, and with terror in his eyes he admitted to me that he thought the same, but had never dared mention it to anyone. And indeed how else could we explain those horrors that were happening around us — we Soviet people brought up in a spirit of dedication to the cause of socialism? Only now, eighteen years later, has life at last shown me how far we were right and how far we were wrong.

At the beginning of October I was informed by note that I had been sentenced by a Special Commission (ie, without trial) to five years in a concentration camp for "Trotskyite counter-revolutionary activity". On October 5 I informed my wife of this and was permitted a meeting with her: a speedy departure on the journey was expected.

The meeting took place at the end of the month. My wife conducted herself sensibly, though she and the young children were already being banished from the city and my fate was unknown to her. She gave me a bag with essentials and we parted, not knowing if we should see each other again.

The convict train got under way on November 8, the day after my family's departure from Leningrad. We were taken in heated wagons under heavy guard, and a couple of days later found ourselves at the Sverdlovsk transit prison, where we stayed about a month. On December 5, the Day of the Soviet Constitution, we began our great Siberian journey — a whole odyssey of fantastic experiences that deserve to be recounted in greater detail.

They transported us with precautions appropriate not to ordinary, beaten, unfortunate folk but to some sort of superhuman villains, capable at any moment of blowing up the whole world, were we to take a single free step. Our train, an endless succession of prison wagons, presented an outlandish sight. On the roof were set up searchlights that lit up the whole area. At various places above and between the wagons machine-guns stuck out; there were guards in great numbers, and at halts they released albatross dogs, ready to rend an escaper limb from limb. On those rare days when we were taken to the bath-house or transferred anywhere they ranged us in lines, made us kneel in the snow and put our hands behind our backs. In that position we would wait until the checking procedure was over, while all around dozens of rifle muzzles peered out at us, and behind, pressing at our very heels, the dogs howled furiously and strained at the leash. We were made to march in close file.

After my return from hospital I was left in peace and not called before the investigator for some time. When interrogations did begin

again — and there were still a few to come — no one hit me any more, and things were limited to the ordinary threats and abuse. Finally in August I was summoned "with my belongings" and transferred to the Kresty Prison.

I remember the boiling hot day when, dressed in a thick woollen coat and carrying a roll of underclothing, I was brought to a small cell at Kresty intended for two people. Ten bare human figures, running with sweat and exhausted from the heat, squatted like Indian gods all round the edge of the cell. I greeted them, stripped off and sat down as the eleventh in their midst. Soon there appeared beneath me a great damp patch on the stone floor. So began my life at Kresty.

In the cell stood one iron bed and on it slept a captain of the Northern Fleet, the recognized cell leader. His legs, injured during interrogation at Archangel, were no more use. The old sea-dog, who had habitually looked death in the eye, was now helpless as a baby.

As Kresty I was not interrogated: evidently the investigation was at an end. The fund got suddenly and sharply worse, and if we had not had the right to buy extra foodstuffs with our own money we should have been half-starved.

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"One step aside and I open fire!" was the usual warning.

Actually, in the entire two-month journey we got out only at Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Chita. It goes without saying that no one else was allowed within a mile of us.

Sixty and more days we toiled along the main Siberian line, lingering in sidings for days at a time. There were some forty men in the wagon, as I recollect. A fierce winter had started and the frosts got deeper every day. A little iron stove was kindled in the centre of the wagon; the orderly sat near by and looked after it. At first we had lived on two levels — one half underneath the

other half above on high plank benches ranged along the sides of the wagon, a little lower than a man's height. But soon the cold drove all those below on to the planks; even here, however, packed into a heap for bodily warmth, we suffered cruelly from the cold. Bit by bit life turned into purely physiological existence without higher interests, where a man's entire concerns were reduced to not dying of hunger or thirst, not freezing through and not being shot like a rabid dog.

Each man received 300 grammes of bread a day, hot water twice a day and a dinner of thin "balanda" [soup] with a ladle of gruel. For starving and frozen men this food was of course not enough. But even this pitiful ration was given out irregularly — and evidently not always through the fault of the privileged criminal prisoners who served it to us. The fact was that the provisioning of this whole vast mass of prisoners moving at that period through Siberia in endless columns presented a complex economic problem.

At many stations severe cold and poor administration made it impossible to supply men even with water. Once we received no water for about three days, and as we greeted the new year of 1939 somewhere around Lake Baykal we had to lick black sooty icicles that had formed on the walls of the wagon from our own exhalations. I shall never manage to forget this New Year's Day feast to the end of my life.

In that wagon I first came up against the world of criminals, who became the bane of life to us who had to drag out our lives beside them, and often under their command.

Criminals — recidivist thieves, robbers, bandits, murderers, with their whole multifarious retinue of sympathizers, assistants and accomplices of various hues and shades — are a people apart, forming a long-established social category that has worked out its own way of life, its own moral code and even its own aesthetic. These men lived by their own laws, and these laws of theirs were stronger than those of any government. They had their own leadership, one word from whom could cost the life of any rank-and-file member of their caste. They were all linked by a common view of life, and for them view and practice of life were one.

Original inhabitants of the prisons and camps, they deeply and genuinely despised us: a motley, variegated and disorientated crowd of chance visitors to their ultramontane world. From their point of view we were pitiful creatures, unworthy of respect and meriting the most merciless exploitation and death. And on occasions when it was in their power they would destroy us with a clear conscience and with the blessing, direct or indirect, of the camp authorities.

I hold to the opinion that a considerable proportion of the criminal fraternity are in fact exceptional people. These are men of outstanding capabilities that for one reason or another have been developed in a criminal direction, hostile to the rational norms of the human community. In the name of their moral code almost all of them are capable of remarkable, at times heroic feats; they would go to their deaths fearlessly, since the contempt of their comrades was for them a hundred times more terrible than any death. In my time, however, the mightiest leaders in the criminal world had already been eliminated, and the entire criminal population of the camps saw in these legends their ideals and tried to live according to the precepts of their heroes. There were no more mighty leaders, but their ideology was alive and unscathed.

Somehow, of its own accord, our wagon divided into two groups: those sentenced under Article 58 settled on one side (4) the criminals on the other. Condemned to coexist, we stared at each other with concealed hostility, and only occasionally did this hostility break through to the surface. I remember how once, without any provocation from my side, one of our criminals who was liable to fits and some sort of instantaneous hysteria attacked me with a log of wood. His comrades restrained him and I was unharmed.

But an atmosphere of peculiar psychological tension never left us for a moment, and put its stamp upon our life in the train.

From time to time the authorities appeared in the wagon to carry out a check. So as to verify the numbers they made us all go on to one ledge of planks. At a special command we had to crawl across a board to the other ledge, and they counted us as we did so. The picture is as vivid before me as if it were happening now: black with soot, beards sprouting, we crawl one after the other on all fours like monkeys across the board, lit by the dim glow of lanterns, while a semi-literate guard holds us at rifle-point and counts and counts away, getting muddled in his tricky calculations.

Insects devoured us, and the two

baths arranged for us at Irkutsk and Chita did not deliver us from this affliction. Both these baths were sheer torment. Each was like an inferno filled with a wildly cackling throng of devils large and small. There was not the remotest possibility of washing. One felt lucky if one managed to save one's personal possessions from the professional criminals. Loss of possessions indicated almost certain death on the journey. This indeed happened to certain unfortunates: they died without reaching camp. In our wagon there were no fatal incidents.

For more than two months our mournful train dragged its way along the main Trans-Siberian line. Two small iced-up windows under the ceiling allowed faint light into our wagon during the short hours of daylight. At other times a candle-end glowed in a lantern, and when candles were not given out the whole wagon was plunged into impenetrable darkness. Pressed tightly together we lay in this primordial gloom, listening to the thudding of the wheels and sunk in disconsolate thoughts about our fate. In the mornings we could only just manage to peer out of the window at the limitless expanse of the Siberian fields, the endless snow-covered forest, the shadowy villages and towns, watched over by columns of vertical smoke, the fantastic sheer cliffs of the shores of Lake Baykal. We were being taken further and further, towards the Far East, towards the end of the world. . . .

In the first days of February we arrived at Khabarovsk. Here we stopped a long time. Then we were suddenly moved backwards, reached Volochaevka and turned northwards off the main line along a newly built branch. Along both sides of the railway there were glimpses of camps with their watch-towers and settlements of modern "gingerbread houses" all built to the same pattern. The kingdom of the BAM (5) was meeting us, its new settlers. The train stopped, there was a rattling of bolts, and we stepped out from our hiding-places into this new world, flooded in sunlight, shackled in a frost of minus fifty, encircled with the apparitions of slim Far Eastern birch-trees rising to the very heavens.

Thus we came to the town of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur.

Translator's notes:

1. Nikolay Tikhonov (b 1896), notable poet of the Russian Civil War, subsequently active in editorial work and in Soviet literary politics; President of the Writers' Union 1944-46.
2. *Triumph of Agriculture* (*Torzhestvo zemledeliya*) — stylized epic poem by Zabolotsky, mostly written 1929, maliciously taken by some critics as a lampoon on collectivization.
3. L. M. Zakovsky: notorious head of Leningrad NKVD, himself subsequently executed.
4. Article of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR (On Counter-Revolutionary Crimes) under which political prisoners were normally sentenced; repealed in 1958.
5. The Baykal-Amur Railway, then under construction.

Afterward Zabolotsky's account stops at the point of his arrival in the Far East and the beginning of his life in the labour-camps. From other sources we know something of his subsequent story, even though the volume he compiled of a hundred letters written to his family in this period has

not yet been published (save for a fragment that appeared in 1972 under the anodyne title *Scenes from the Far East*). Till 1943 he was a labourer on construction-sites at various camps in the area of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur; for part of the time he worked in the draughtsman's office, which, given the harsh conditions of outdoor work, probably helped to save his life. His health however was permanently undermined when in 1943 he was transferred to work on soda-extraction in the Central Asian steppe: he died eventually of a second heart attack (not, as Western accounts have it, of tuberculosis) in consequence.

A strange episode from Zabolotsky's camp existence was first given currency by Ivanov-Razumnik, who himself emigrated after having been imprisoned, and repeated by B. Filippov in the introduction to an American edition of Zabolotsky's poetry published in 1965. According to this account the poet managed to smuggle a letter to Nikolay Tikhonov (see Note 1), whom the NKVD had named (with the novelist Konstantin Fedin in Moscow) as leader of the supposed "terrorist organization" for "membership" of which Zabolotsky and others had been convicted. With pointed irony the letter congratulated Tikhonov and Fedin not only on still being at liberty, but on hav-

ing recently been awarded high State honours, while rank-and-file members of their "organization" languished in prison; it went on to suggest that since there were certain inconsistencies in the situation they should either admit their guilt and request to be imprisoned themselves, or take steps to have their "underlings" set free. Ivanov-Razumnik's story is not entirely true as told, but does have some factual basis; such a letter was written, not to Tikhonov, but to the Writers' Union. Characteristically Zabolotsky never gave up his obstinate desire to make the authorities admit that he was wrongly convicted, and kept petitioning the leadership of the Writers' Union to that effect; there was little they could do to curtail his sentence, but the stubborn campaign probably paid off to the extent that Zabolotsky was released fairly soon after his five-year sentence had expired (on August 18, 1944), though compelled to remain in exile for some time longer.

Only two poems date from the period of his imprisonment: one composed during the train journey through Siberia, one the next year. In the difficult conditions of exile he began to work again, on a project he had already considered in the 1930s; a translation into modern Russian verse of the twelfth-century masterpiece *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*.

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## Faust as form

By Idris Parry

JOHN GEAREY:  
Goethe's 'Faust':  
The Making of Part One  
228pp. Yale University Press. £13.30.  
0 300 02571 8

Goethe was not much good at writing plays. He was essentially a lyricist. One of the characteristics of his *Faust* is that it seems at first to be a succession of monologues. This professor who knows everything and understands nothing is talking about himself and his situation, but talking not only in his own name but also through characters who appear to be separate. Do we really believe any author has the power, denied to the rest of mankind, to possess completely the mind and memory of another person? It seems hardly necessary to say that fictional characters are not real people, yet critics still try to find out how many children had Lady Macbeth.

Even Mephistopheles is a subjective reflection. "To think," said Hofmannsthal, "that the heavens and hells of all religions are made out of the human mind. It all depends on the power of projection." This projection is form given to feeling, and the form projected as *Faust* is confusing because irregular by Aristotelian standards. The present book by John Gearey is an attempt to explain these irregularities by reference to Goethe's changing moods and activities over the long period during which the play, or poem, was written.

This attempt has been made before. Explanations have been sought ever since *Faust, ein Fragment* was published in 1790 and troubled many readers by its apparent shapelessness. And the idea of explaining form in Goethe through parallel study of the life is scarcely new. Goethe's well-known acknowledgment of his work as "fragments of a great confession" has been taken as a direct invitation to critics to relate the fragments to their subjective creator. *Faust*, written over a period of sixty years from Goethe's young manhood to old age, "the main business" as he called it, must seem the perfect vehicle for this kind of comparison.

Barker Fairley (*A Study of Goethe*, 1947) outlined the terms of the pursuit: "If the life and works are so closely involved in each other as Goethe made them, out to be, there must be a way of involving

both in our interpretation and of making them support one another in a fuller understanding of him." Professor Gearey follows exactly this course, not necessarily to extend our understanding of Goethe but certainly to extend our understanding of the form of *Faust*. He too pursues Goethe's inner biography, what Fairley calls "the account of what went on in his mind in its progress from immaturity to maturity".

Gearey depends heavily on Fairley's *Goethe's Faust: Six Essays*, 1953, and Eudo C. Mason's memorable book *Goethe's Faust: Its Genesis and Purport*, 1967. He is more subjective than either of these authors; his book could almost be taken as yet another Faustian monologue. The form here reveals a lot about the writer's enthusiasm for his subject. He wants to tell those who are ignorant of German literature about the greatness of this work. He believes, rightly, that readers outside Germany or German studies must be supplied with the kind of background information which is naturally available to people acquainted with German culture. He works from *Faust* in English translation, using Anna Swanwick's version, first published in 1850. So this book is not intended for Goethe scholars, though no doubt many would be stimulated to argument by what is essentially a personal discussion based on detailed knowledge of the text and secondary sources.

Yet there is some confusion of approach in this book. The author tells us that "since the purpose of this study is to provide an apology for *Faust* as a masterpiece of world literature, a knowledge of the original . . . could not automatically be assumed." The knowledge that can't be assumed goes a little way beyond this. A footnote to the title *Faust*, for instance, explains that "Ur" means original. Another note directs the reader to *The Oxford Companion to German Literature* for a definition of the terms "romantic" and "classic" as they apply to German literature. Details of literary history are spelled out with elemental simplicity. "The year 1775 marked the move to Weimar and the assumption of responsibilities at the court. . . ." and so on.

There is nothing wrong about giving this information. It is necessary to know these things before we can begin to understand *Faust*. Such details have their place in what may be a series of lectures given to a class of eager students pursuing a course of comparative literature in translation and perhaps not yet knowing enough about literature to make any com-

This apparently so impressed the local authorities in Karaganda that they petitioned for him to be allowed to return to Moscow to complete work on it; he managed to do so in 1946, though still living in considerable difficulties. Finally, on October 6, 1951, his conviction was officially quashed at the instance of the Writers' Union (and in particular of Aleksandr Fadeyev, its powerful General Secretary, who had been deeply impressed by Zabolotsky in a long conversation that had followed a chance meeting at Peredelkino in 1946). A footnote to Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope Abandoned* suggests that "the poetry he published in the late Stalin years shows the price he had to pay for this 'pardon', but the implications of this are unacceptable, since from 1949 to late 1953 no original poetry by him was printed at all, and the small number of poems which had appeared in the couple of years before that included half a dozen of his finest works. Uninterested in fame or fortune, unwaveringly convinced of his mission, Zabolotsky lived frugally on the proceeds of translation-work, and only from 1966 — the year in which he wrote 'The Story of My Imprisonment' — were there unmistakable signs of the public recognition that has been growing ever since.

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## Mother

Stone age men were as peaceful as gorillas grazing on herbs or leaves and when they died re-entering the wombs of their mothers into the earth, under their mounds. Women wove our fate, their looms were firesteel altars. Then came the ages of bronze, of iron, the solar heroes Lugh and Apollo who like eagles could look at the sun without blinking and death was no fall into an underworld womb but an ascent into Heaven, a transformation to angels.

I watch my mother and think of this history as she squats in her council flat like Arachne knitting my scarf, complaining she hasn't seen me. Mothers are our light whilst they wear pretty dresses which we can just remember. Then they become old things afraid of death, of everything, nodding to sleep by gas fires, our most egoistic selves reflected in the graduation photos on their dressers.

My scarf of fate's now long enough, the needles fall limp in her big-knuckled hands. She thinks graves are old-fashioned: no tomb and cross for her, no marble verse, poets in any case are liars, "Cremation's the modern way", box, bones and all disappearing into solar fires.

Glyn Hughes



# On the domestic side

By Jill Stephenson

RICHARD J. EVANS and W. R. LEE  
Editors:  
The German Family  
302pp. Croom Helm. £13.95.  
0 7099 0067 8

The National Socialists knew what they thought the German Family was: "Aryan", healthy and numerous. The result has been that for forty years historians, particularly in Germany, have steered clear of the subject, apparently fearful of running the risk of guilt by association. It has devolved on to sociologists, demographers and oral historians - some of whom appear here - to apply to the history of the family in Germany techniques already used by historians, among others, in Britain and France. The initiative in bringing these scholars together has, however, been that of a historian, Richard Evans, whose enterprising work in periodically assembling colleagues to discuss an aspect of social history at seminars funded by the SSRC lies behind *The German Family*. The diversity of intellectual disciplines involved is positively welcomed by the editors with the assertion that the history of the family "must necessarily be interdisciplinary in orientation if it is to realize its full potential".

It may be this same diversity that has led the nucleus of regular seminar attendees to seek uniformity in a distinctive methodology and a quasi-technical vocabulary which can leave the outsider with a feeling of truly masonic exclusion: "mode" (as in "mode of production"), "normative", "prescriptive", "locate" (meaning, in effect, "identify"), and, ugliest of the ugliest, "conceptualize", recur with code-like regularity. "Familial", "developmental" and "behavioural" figure where "family", "development" and "behaviour" would serve adequately. The professed aim of some of those involved, of "demythologizing" areas of German history which have become stultified by an old or new orthodoxy, is at once thwarted by the writers represented here. For the vocabulary is explicable only if one can understand the methodology of what is self-consciously characterized as "the New Social History".

The key here is Robert Lee's assertion that "too often empiricism has superseded the need for a secure theoretical framework". . . . German historical research into the history of the family would undoubtedly benefit from the perspective that a wider theoretical approach might offer". Thus the language acquires its own value-system: "empirical", like "appearance", is inescapably pejorative, while conversely "conceptual" and "theoretical", like "resistance", are inherently praiseworthy. Although this view prevails, there is no three-line whip to enforce it, and Gerhard Wilke and Kurt Wagner, in their vivid and entertaining view of "Social Structures in a German Village between the Two World Wars", substantially based on oral sources, take a swipe at the pedlars of "conceptual frameworks", affirming that "the empirical analysis of the historical process must accompany any definition of social institutions" and criticizing work which "still puts theoretical speculation before research into concrete situations in all their variety". The two views expressed may not be diametrically opposed to each other, but the manifest difference between them is not an issue with which the editors care to grapple.

What, then, is this "German family"? The answer that, not surprisingly, emerges is that there was (and is) no such thing as "the German family". But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there has been an "ideal" family, not so different these days from the breakfast cereal and soap-powder media families: the "bourgeois" family, which had little to do with reality for the vast majority of Germans, including many middle-class Germans, was exalted to a high moral level to which all Germans, whatever their station in life, were exhorted by state and

church to aspire. It is this "bourgeois ideal" family that is under consideration here: it is also under attack. Enthusiasm for the offensive can, however, lead to an excess of zeal and its attendant risks, as when Robyn Dasey lets slip a *non sequitur*: "By the turn of the [twentieth] century the bourgeois German ideal of motherhood had become so firmly entrenched that successive governments concerned about the defence of the fatherland, sought by the suppression of knowledge of and access to birth control methods, and by the active encouragement of mother and infant welfare measures, to reverse the rapid decline in the birth rate." It was, in any case, after the turn of the century that the decline in the birth rate became "rapid". But the extent to which official concern and legislative activity actually affected the daily lives and relationships of ordinary Germans in both town and country was limited, as several of the contributions show. Richard Evans, in "Politics and the Family", argues that the apparent contradiction between the condemnation of the family in much Marxist writing and the adoption of the family ideal by the Social Democrats is superficial, because the SPD accepted a negotiated version of the "higher form" of the family which Marx believed would emerge from the ruins of capitalist society. . . . The SPD turned the bourgeois family to its own purposes, using it against the effects of clerical and educational conservatism on women and children.

Heilwig Schomerus describes how Württemberg's stringent marriage laws led working-class couples to marry relatively late - over thirty for men, in the late twenties for women - but did not deter them from starting a family before wedlock. The resilience of family, and indeed village life, relationships and tradition in rural areas in the face of changing circumstances, including state intervention, emerge graphically from Wilke and Wagner's contribution and also from Robert Lee's essay on "The Peasant Family and Social Change". Lee shows that the exertions of the Bavarian State in the nineteenth century failed to make an impression on ingrained social habits such as a high rate of illegitimacy, heavy drinking and the persistence of superstition. Wilke and Wagner make the point - specifically about the inter-war period but applicable more widely - that "we must concede these villagers their own 'rationality', regardless of any theoretical concepts, rather than automatically considering their behaviour as irrational". Lee's material deserves this approach, showing as it does how the village community in Bavaria insulated the family from the new "modern" trends which were the product of urban society. As he suggests, where child labour was of vital importance to the rural economy, the resistance to educational reform requiring compulsory attendance at school was bound to be tooth-and-nail. And if that isn't empirical history, I don't know what is.

Some of the contributions brought sympathetically to mind the trade of a colleague who, some years ago, fulminated that "economic historians think that nothing is relevant that cannot be rung up on a cash register". It is no doubt high time that more historians, especially social historians, became numerate and found out about histograms. Arthur Imhof's "Women, Family and Death", with nine and a half pages of tables to fifteen and a half of text, should help to educate some. But he, too, lays himself open to criticism for not exploiting these copious figures to the full. He tells us that "a slight decline in [maternal] childbirth mortality occurs . . . at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. No further basic changes can be detected during the course of the nineteenth century." And yet a calculation can be made from his table 5.4A to show figures for perinatal maternal mortality as follows:

1780-1809 = 142.4  
1810-1839 = 81.5  
1840-1869 = 106.5  
1870-1899 = 88.0  
1780-1899 = 109

These fluctuations may well not signify a "basic" change, and Dr Imhof's sample is of four small areas only, three rural and one larger urban one. But the query lingers on: why was maternal perinatal mortality so (relatively) high in the middle decades of the nineteenth century? Imhof is also silent on the clear indication, from his figures, that while the total number of maternal fatalities around birth rose in the early to mid-nineteenth century (shown above), in the same period the number of fatalities at first births fell by 8 per cent. Also, first-birth fatalities declined proportionately more - indeed, quite dramatically - between 1780-1809 and 1810-1839. This may not be incompatible with Imhof's statement that "the risk of death for mothers was normally greatest for the birth of the first child", but in the light of his assertion the evidence which I have wrung out of his figures again deserves comment.

Further, Heilwig Schomerus's highly numerate study of the social background (defined by father's occupation) of workers in the Esslingen machine factory goes to great lengths to show that first-generation workers whose fathers had been in the textile industry have had idiosyncratically in their family life compared with their workmates from other backgrounds, but similarly to the Esslingen textile workers.

But she has no comment to make about the relevance or otherwise of her information that "workers' wives usually worked in Esslingen's textile industry". And what, one would like to know, was the influence of a worker's background on his/her choice of spouse if background had such a profound effect on age at marriage and the number of children born to a couple? The cash register may not be able to provide the answer, but the question is worth asking, as Wilke and Wagner show. In the rural economy, they say,

"marriage was altogether too serious a matter to be left to the decision of the couple concerned". As a relatively prosperous farmer explained to them: "Women from cow-farmer households were too slow to be of use on the larger farms. They were so used to the slow trot of the cattle that they just couldn't keep up with our pace."

The love-match was the fignient of the "bourgeois ideal" imagination, an attempt to escape from the reality of a union determined by economic function, with husband and wife, and subsequently children, also, engaged in a "common enterprise" (Karin Hausen). It need not have been inherently disastrous that "the increasingly feminised household" was the reason for "the relegation of women to a peripheral role in the production process" (Robyn Dasey), but the "bourgeois" stress on the "natural" role of women as housewives and mothers led to vast numbers of less well-off German women labouring under a double burden. The running of the household and the bearing and rearing of children were "natural" duties carried on by women who, on the land, had a vital economic function to perform in looking after smaller farm animals and growing fruit and vegetables. As industrialization proceeded apace, low-cost female labour had a particular attraction. For those whose domestic duties made work away from home impracticable, "outwork" as seamstresses for a pittance was a small but valued addition to the family income.

It may be too much to say that the picture drawn here by one contributor after another presents something of a male chauvinist paradise in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Germany, but what clearly emerges is the extent to which it was women, and sometimes children, who were most oppressed by the realities of life, including specifically born to a couple? The cash register may not be able to provide the answer, but the question is worth asking, as Wilke and Wagner show. In the rural economy, they say,

having to deal with disease-infected clothing and linen; women succumbed in far larger numbers than men during the cholera epidemics. Both Imhof and Robert Lee argue that agrarian reform in the early nineteenth century actually worsened women's position by adding to their burdens. Not until the mobilization of urban working-class women in the women's section of the SPD in the later nineteenth century did the grievances of lower-class women begin to be articulated, as Richard Evans describes. And children, like wives, were valued for their working potential above all, especially on the land. Robert Lee chillingly outlines "peasant indifference to the fate of infants" in Bavaria once the inheritance was secured. Presumably, the absence of breast-feeding contributed not only to a high rate of infant mortality, as he says, but also to a weakening of the bond between mother and child. Weaklings, he implies, were left to sink or swim - perhaps even literally, although he does not cite infanticide as a means of keeping the size of the family to its optimum economic potential.

All in all, family life among the less prosperous in both town and country emerges as being a far cry from the harmonious, loving, well-ordered moral ideal of the educated middle-class writers whom Karin Hausen describes (in sometimes virtually impenetrable sociological language) as setting an impossible and irrelevant standard. And at the end of it all, parents were eased out of the leading role, and also the prime accommodation, on a farm, while among Heilwig Schomerus's factory workers "old age became the most terrifying prospect of the worker's life" because of the almost inevitable poverty brought on by a decline in earnings after the age of about forty.

*The German Family's* contributors show skill and insight not merely as capable researchers and analysts, but also as observers of life cycles, life style and human attitudes. That may be an insult to people who pride themselves above all on "a more rigorous theoretical approach", but it is certainly not intended as such.

## Capital account

By W. E. Yates

FELIX CZEIKE:  
Geschichte der Stadt Wien  
296pp. Vienna and Munich: Molden. DM49.80  
3 217 00630 5

Vienna is a city of seminal influence. As the seat of the Habsburgs, as the predominant centre of classical music from the late eighteenth till the early twentieth century, as a constant magnet to visitors who have documented both its beauties and its growth, as the home of Freud, Klimt and Wittgenstein and one of the most important centres of modernism - in all these respects it occupies a unique and central place in the cultural consciousness of modern Europe, and the story of its development has often been told. But just as every age retranslates and reinterprets the classics in its own terms, so the history of our capital cities needs constant retelling; and no one is better equipped to provide a history of Vienna for the general reader of the 1980s than Felix Czeike.

There are many possible approaches to writing such a history: emphasis can be placed on the cultural life of the city (as in the account by Richard Kralik and Hans Schlitter, 1912), or on its political life (either the civic administration, or the interaction of court and capital), or on social changes, most remarkable during the period of rapid expansion in the nineteenth century. In all these areas the story of this city of palaces, music and theatre, of

Turkish sieges and the post-Napoleonic Congress, the capital of a huge multinational empire and the birthplace of psychoanalysis, can read like a history of Europe in miniature, constantly reflecting - and often initiating - major political as well as cultural developments. Such wider perspectives do not, perhaps, fully unfold in Professor Czeike's new book, which provides rather an inward-looking account; what it attempts to do is to suggest the interrelation of the political and cultural history of the city with the economic and social developments that determined it. It is in the attention given to economic factors that his approach most clearly contrasts with that adopted by, for example, Karl Weiss (one of his predecessors as Director of the City Archives) in the best known of earlier medium-sized histories (1872), and that his book is most clearly the product of our own age.

Czeike spends only a few pages on Roman Vienna, his concern is chiefly with the period from the Middle Ages up to the withdrawal of the Allied forces of occupation in 1955. The years from the late eighteenth century until 1848 (musically and theatrically, but also socially and politically of the greatest importance) are given only half as much space as the next sixty years - a questionable distribution of emphasis in so far as the history of Vienna, more than any other city's, is inseparable from that of its cultural life. On the other hand, a distinctive strength of the book, one only to be expected from the editor of the *Grosses Wiener-Lexikon*, is its constant reference to localities - to

districts, streets and buildings - so that the story it tells is closely linked throughout to its physical setting.

The telling could have been twice as long and still not have been longer than the book by Karl Weiss. Concision is a great virtue; but events such as those of the 1848 Revolution or the Anschluss of 1938 (Karl Zuckmayer's memoirs contain a memorable account of Vienna at that time), merit recounting in more than a few paragraphs. Particularly in the cultural field the compression of the material leads occasionally to rather banal or even misleading generalizations, as when the author refers to misunderstandings of Grillparzer's "monarchistic" plays (which are in fact deeply double-edged), or implies that Nestroy's originality lay in adding "local colour" to borrowed material, or simply repeats verbatim a comment about the development of a "Silver Age" of operetta at the turn of the century.

The tendency to over-succinctness is worsened by the lack of a bibliography and of an index of place-names - because the book is sure to go into further editions. While it is not designed for reference, it presents its material in an accessible and coherent fashion; the chapters are all clearly organized and sub-headed; it is remarkably readable considering the amount of material it includes; and it is studiously bound, well printed and attractively illustrated. When the time for revision comes, the story that Professor Czeike has to tell is undoubtedly rich enough both in events of European importance and in figures of significance to justify considerable expansion.

## Crazy and disappointed

By Lindsay Duguid

JOYCE MAYNARD:  
Baby Love  
244pp. Deutsch. £6.95.  
0 233 97386 9

The setting of *Baby Love* is a small New Hampshire town in which all the inhabitants are crazy - in the particularly American sense of the word which embraces all kinds of instability from the mildly odd to the psychopathic. The communal dementia is fed by a rich diet of television, rock music and sex: its victims are nurtured in turn by junk food, liquor and dope. A morose catalogue of brand names reflects their physical cravings and there are constant references to stars (Linda Ronstadt, Dolley Parton). The characters do not even want to be these people; they simply imagine themselves looking like them.

The main characters are three teenage mothers: Sandy, Wanda and Tara, whose lives are dominated by their babies. Sandy, aged eighteen, who married Mark when she found she was pregnant, finds hers some compensation for disappointment in married life. Mark Junior shares his parents' water-bed and provides emotional solace: "The nice thing about dancing with Mark Junior in her arms is, Sandy's never out of step. She feels the way Ginger Ro-

gers must have felt in those old Fred Astaire movies. Or the girl in *Saturday Night Fever*, John Travolta's partner . . . She leads of course." Wanda, aged sixteen, is more of a good-time girl. She has not seen Melissa's father since she revealed that she was pregnant and although she enjoys dressing Melissa up and chatting about baby-care, she finds it hard to cope with interference from the baby's grandmother, Mrs Ramsey, as well as working as a waitress and having a full sex life. She recalls with nostalgia the first half-hour after Melissa was born when "everybody was interested in her" but she neglects the baby and, when exasperated, slaps her hard. Tara, also sixteen, had "never gone all the way before". She works in the town's "just-like-us" store, takes good care of Sunshine and finds breast-feeding rewarding: "My body makes milk all over it and she can create something they sell at the Grand Union. My body works." All three women find life a disappointment, and cannot make any connection between the intensity of feeling engendered by motherhood and the casual teenage life they have recently left.

Sandy, Wanda and Tara live in the centre of town. On the outskirts are other more radical cases. There is Ann, who has just parted from her long-term married lover and who lives alone, spending her time eating, making herself vomit and trying a succession of slimming aids; Jill who fears she may be pregnant by the

local hit-and-run merchant Virgil; and Carla, a New Yorker who is trying to conceive in order to hold on to Greg. Not far away in the Gond Samaritan Hospital is the Gary Gilmore-like figure of Wayne, who has acted out his fantasies on his girl friend Loretta, imprisoning her, performing an abortion on her with a piece of twisted wire and ritualistically murdering her. Wayne places an advertisement in the personal column of the local newspaper which is answered by Ann: "Somewhere out there is one person who will know this is meant for her. The rest will be too frightened - say they want love, but opt for light conversation, gourmet food, new dance steps. I have only one thing to offer. Total passionate devotion, my heart." The novel ends as Wayne approaches Ann's house. At this stage Tara takes to the road, Melissa dies as Mrs Ramsey, now demented, breaks into the Woman's Health Clinic, thus preventing Jill's abortion. Mark loses his job and Greg prepares to tell Carla he no longer loves her.

As Joyce Maynard engineers these various sticky ends, the action becomes wilder and more blackly comic, and the individual stories seem less important than a view of society as a whole. Maynard is successful in presenting her material in its raw state (the characters have the authentically sloppy inner thoughts and dreams familiar from interviews and case histories), but falters a little at the end in too sudden a transition from the pathetic to the nasty.

## Writing on the wall

By James Lasdun

HOWARD BUTEN:  
From Little Accorns  
156pp. Brighton: Harvester Press. £6.95.  
0 7108 0390 7

*From Little Accorns* offers a new slant on the old theme of childhood romance turned into tragedy by heartless and wicked adults. Little Burt has been sent to a mental institution for doing something to little Jessica. We aren't told what until the end of the novel, but we assume it must have been pretty dreadful. Burt is given to obstinacy, and refuses to discuss himself with his inquisitive shrink, Dr Nevele. Instead, he writes the story of his affair with Jessica - on the wall of the institution's "quiet room".

The symbolic value of this device never quite compensates for its impracticality, but that minor irritant aside, the chief problem with this book is its author's taste for all things sugary. Burt writes the sad story of his life as if he were scribbling it to a Hollywood weeper. His innocent vision of the world is infuriatingly cute - "Rain says a noise: Shh. You can hear it when it comes down. It is God telling us to be quiet". "We went to the penguins who wore Tuxedos".

On top of this cuteness, Burt is given a somewhat obtrusive awareness of his own role as mixed-up kid in a world designed for adults. He keeps reminding the reader of his youth - "I had forgot about school because of vacation, which is long when you're a child"; he always knows when he's used a word that "I got conniption fit from my mom. She said I had one"; he steals Dr Nevele's gum report on himself, but although he deems it worth copying onto his wall, he claims not to have understood it - "It is too big words".

Howard Buten's intentions are certainly worthy; nobody wants to see little boys labelled as budding psychopaths when all they have done is indulged in some harmless mutual fondling with little girls (Burt's misdeed, disappointingly perhaps, turns out to be no more than this). But the writing on the wall is on the whole too pat to cause alarm in the

heads of those to whom it is addressed.

It should be said in its defence that this is a first novel and that, as such, it is more efficient than many. Moreover, on the few occasions that Buten resists his impulse to coast every emotion or thought with a layer of saccharin, he shows himself to be an astute observer of children. There is, for example, a good sketch of an autistic boy. Equally well evoked is the atmosphere of anxiety and near-hysteria that pervades a classroom during a spelling competition. Sometimes even the patness of the writing

is unexpectedly appropriate, and therefore amusing: "He said he was going to make his Halloween costume out of cardboard boxes from the furniture store across the street. I said what are you going to go as. He said a cardboard box".

Unfortunately, however, the final impression this novel leaves is one of sentimentality and sickness rather than astuteness. Burt's problems may indeed be located in "Yourselville" as one rebellious psychiatrist suggests to Dr Nevele, but it doesn't do to say so in quite that way.

## Why murder

By David Montrose

SALLY RENA:  
A Painless Death  
156pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £5.95.  
0 297 77999 0

Sally Rena has an unfortunate habit of giving the game away early in her novels. With her first, *The Sea Road West* (1975), it would have taken a particularly inattentive reader not to realize inside three chapters that the remaining seventeen were to recount the progress of a love affair - ending in death and madness - between a Roman Catholic priest and a teenage girl in a village on the west coast of Scotland.

In *A Painless Death*, Rena's third novel, the disclosure period has been reduced to just over a page. The painless death of the title is by drowning: the body of a Swiss girl is found in a river near Bellshill, a small town outside Glasgow. A verdict of suicide is returned. But the reader is well aware - due to the author's heavy hints - that the au pair was murdered by one or both of the two young sisters, Patricia ("Tissy") and May Patterson, who had supposedly discovered the corpse while walking their dog. After this brief prologue, the novel flashes back to a time before the birth of the sisters and outlines the events leading up to, and following, the murder.

The problem about the use of this

device is that, having dispensed with any element of mystery or suspense by revealing what is to happen, the writer is charged with the responsibility of engaging and sustaining readers' interest in how and why it happens. For the most part, Rena fails to fulfil this obligation.

The overall impression is of opportunities missed. Rena's imagination has yielded numerous possibilities that a more accomplished writer might have exploited to the full: the graduation of Tissy and May from vandalism to murder; the relationship between the sisters and their social worker. None of these is developed.

The matter of *A Painless Death* would have lent itself easily to sensationalism. Rena has resolutely avoided this potentially lucrative path, trying instead to write an unambiguously "serious" novel. She tells a plain tale, but it is not so much simple as simplified: the complex issues involved are evaded or glossed over. Rena is willing to expand much print on description, but the brevity with which she usually chooses to portray things that matter reveals a lack of artistic depth.

*A Painless Death* deals with "the force of evil", specifically the question of why Tissy and (possibly) May became murderers. Clearly, the reader is meant to conclude that murderers are not born, but made. Quite how they are made, however, remains impenetrably obscure, and the murder of the au pair comes across as a gratuitous act that the rest of the novel fails to make explicable.

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